THRILLING! DRAMATIC! GREAT! "THE BEAUTY OF THE MILLS," NEXT WEEK

THE CHICAGO LEDGER

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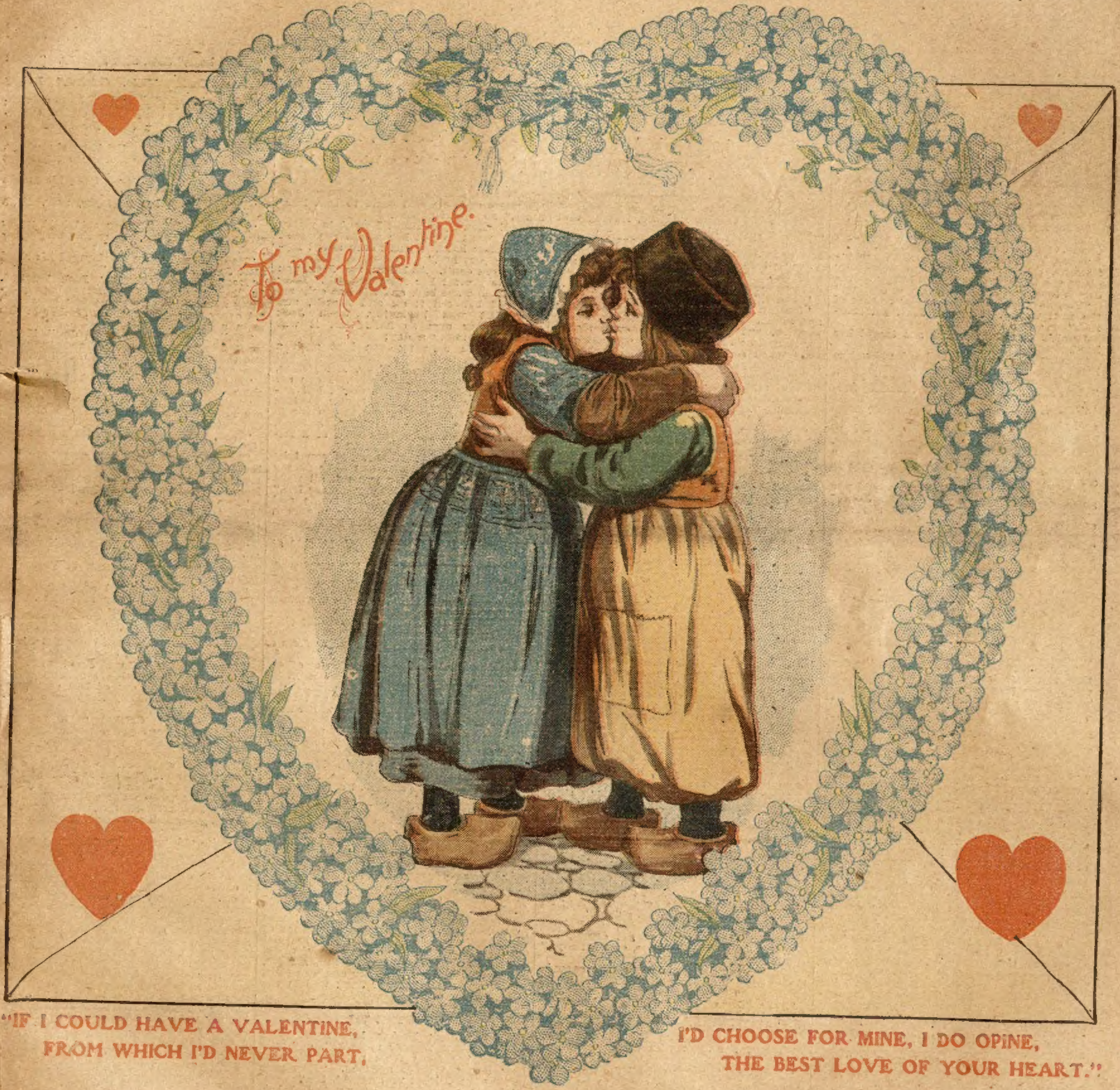
To my Valentine.

"IF I COULD HAVE A VALENTINE,
FROM WHICH I'D NEVER PART,
I'D CHOOSE FOR MINE, I DO OPINE,
THE BEST LOVE OF YOUR HEART."

SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY.

Saint Valentine's Day! And midst old recollections
That rush to my heart with an echoing joy,
I remember once more the old hopes and dejections,
When you were a girl, dear, and I was a boy;
When I sent you a rose on that February morning,
And with it a passionate, rhyme-halting lay,
And met your reproaches and well-acted scorning
By whispering: "Sweet, 'tis Saint Valentine's Day!"

And the sky was so blue, and the sunshine so yellow,
And the soft southern wind blew so shrilly and sweet,
And each tiny bird sang so loud to its fellow,
While the snowdrops and crocuses bloomed at your feet;
Small wonder our hearts broke to tremulous beating,
As we learned in the wonderful, old-fashioned way,
What the earth, and the sky, and the air were repeating
In mystical cadence of Valentine's Day.

And now that the crazy-sweet babble and laughter
Of golden-haired children have rung in our ears,
And brought us the hope of a tender hereafter
To link to the thought of those far-away years—
Once more in the words of the happy boy-lover,
I veil deeper meaning in whimsical way—
A meaning your heart will be quick to discover—
By whispering: "Sweet, 'tis Saint Valentine's Day!"

The Mills of Justice

By CONSTANCE BEATRICE WILLARD

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CHAPTER VI.

Jennie and Kit were dressing in their room, once Kit's alone, and chattering as girls will, borrowing each other's property in a way that bespeaks friendly intimacy and fully tested love.

Those who had seen the slight, brown-haired girl in the winter, coughing desperately, would have scarcely recognized her as she brushed her cloud of hair, and deftly arranged it in the manner she was forced to wear it in the store, for Jennie was now well and happy, although she knew that Jack and Kit worried about her and her having to work for a living. She was wrapped in her mist of sweet love, and cared very little for the future. The present was enough, and spring was near at hand. After spring would come another delightful summer, that was enough.

Kit had finished her hair and was absent-mindedly fastening her white waist, buttoned in the back, by pulling it down in front and making a double curve of herself. Jennie finally saw her, and, leaving her hair hanging, good naturedly gave her a shake, and then fastened the waist herself.

"What's the matter, looney?" she asked.

"I was thinking," Kit said gravely.

"Must have been a strong think, eh?"

"It was about you, dearie," Kit returned, trying to hide the tears in her eyes.

"Why, Kit Nelson!" Jennie said in astonishment, throwing her arms affectionately about the taller girl. "I'm as happy as the day is long, and you know it, you darling."

"Yes, now, but Jennie you don't think of the next winter. You and Jack get married."

Jennie's face flamed, and she tossed her head.

"I mean it. You work so hard and get so little, and Jack wants you, I know that."

"He's never asked me to marry him," Jennie said half laughing, but looking nervous.

"Not asked you? Are you deaf? His every action means marriage. He's straight and so are you. Don't play with him, Jennie, fire's dangerous, but get married and let the future take care of itself."

"I don't understand you," Jennie said in a bewildered way.

"No, I see you don't. Tell me, would you go about with Phil as you do with Jack?"

The girl shuddered. "Never," she said angrily.

"I do," she returned, laughing coldly, "and I'll tell you just why. One reason is that I have my poor old Bennie back home who cares a good deal too much for me, and then I can take care of myself. When Phil Houston tried the kissing act on me, last night, and not for the first time, I handed him something back he won't forget in a hurry. I'll not be bothered with any more stunts like that. I just let him kiss me, and then I laughed, and said as though I could hardly speak:

" 'My, but you're clumsy! Is this the first time you ever kissed a girl?' I wish you could have seen his face. Phil Houston, who thinks himself a lady-killer!" and Kit fairly screamed.

"But, Kit, don't you think you made yourself out as pretty experienced?" Jennie asked shyly.

"Oh, Phil ain't no fool. He knew just why I did it, even if his good opinion of himself didn't make him sure that every woman was dying to have him make love."

Jennie shuddered. Ever since she had first seen this young man, when she had been singled out by him for special attention, she had been afraid. What caused such a feeling it would have been difficult for her to determine, but as it was, she could have cried at times, as she saw his eyes fasten upon her face. There was a difference now, she knew that, too, but she did not appreciate, as did Kit, that Phil had learned to love this fair-faced child, and that there might be trouble for her.

"I say, Jen, don't ever go out with Phil alone," she said slowly, adjusting her belt, and looking at her trim waist in the little mirror, as though her whole life depended upon her arranging it to her mind.

"No fear," Jennie replied, picking up her hat, and with womanish ingenuity managing to rejuvenate its wintry appearance, but she wondered if Kit really was growing to like Phil.

"You went with him last night," Jennie remarked.

"I know it, and you did with Jack."

"Oh, it's different with Jack," Jennie said with one of her brilliant blushes.

"Say, dearie," Kit whispered, drawing the girl to her side on the bed, and speaking so earnestly that Jennie was startled:

"I want you married. You are so good and innocent, I can't tell you what it means to be a young, pretty girl, and so unprotected. Men are awfully dangerous, both the bad and the good, and you are getting pretty soft over Jack."

"I love him, and he loves me," Jennie replied with a pretty dignity.

"Sure, but don't you see? No, you don't, but if he asks you to marry him, do it, no matter if he has to borrow the money for a license. Some day you will understand me. Jack's a nice, decent fellow, but he's running with some fellows I don't like, and there might come a time when his head wasn't quite steady. Then, you see it leaves you so unprotected. Old Lance is making eyes at you all the time, too."

"Now, Kit, that isn't true. Mr. Lance is nice to me because he says I don't make him any trouble, and that, as a floorwalker, he likes it."

Kit scoffed. "Poof, don't you believe it! Why, the more he can report on us the better he's pleased. If he can't make out a good long list he'll be transferred, and some one else will be put in his place."

"But I can't treat him ugly," Jennie pleaded.

"Of course you can't. You must giggle and turn up your big eyes at him, or there will be enough complaints to give you the G. B."

"Then what shall I do?" sobbed Jennie, who had already been annoyed by the floorwalker's attentions, but only because she felt them a dishonor to Jack.

"Get married."

"But, Kit, we can't," Jennie said, almost sharply. "We've talked it over often enough."

"I thought he had never asked you to marry him," Kit said, but with a happy tone in her voice.

"He hasn't, but we are going to be just as soon as we can."

The two girls kissed, then Kit asked in a low tone:

"When is that going to be?"

"I don't know," Jennie said, a little sadly. She was not a business girl in any sense of the word. To her it was terrible to have to face so many people and be exposed to all kinds of treatment and criticism. Her dream of life was to be with Jack, happy in the coming summer, leaving that annoying future alone.

"I know a lot of folks who are living on less than Jack gets," Kit continued.

Jennie turned from her very sharply, and said decidedly: "Kit, you're awful good, but you must not interfere in our business."

"Jennie!"

"I mean it. We've talked it over again and again. Jack has an awful responsible position, but he don't get enough money for it, and he's seen too much of what happens when a fellow and a girl marry on nothing, to put us there."

Regardless of crumpling her newly pressed suit, Kit still sat on the bed, her knees drawn up in her arms, as she said slowly: "There ought not be any such cases."

"There are. Jack has told me of them. There was one the other day. Belle Singer, remember Belle?"

"Yes."

"Well, she married Ward Long. He was making good money, and it seemed all right, but when the baby came she was awful sick, had to go to the hospital, the baby died, and now she is back home with her mother, trying to earn a little money to get a divorce. Says she hates him. Their furniture's all gone, and she is real ugly, while Ward is drinking like something awful."

"I know all about them," was Kit's decided reply. "When they married they went off on a trip, and spent money that Ward borrowed from a money-lender, giving a lien on his wages. They agreed to pay out half their income in rent, but thought they'd take several lodgers to make up. Then their things were bought on installment, and the fun began. As they had been fond of going to parties and having a good time, it was hard to settle down, and Ward took to hanging about saloons and Belle visited with her two lodgers. One was a girl, and the other a man. The two got to going out together, and taking Belle along, until she had to stay at home, but she by that time was having an awful time making ends meet, and paying the rent and the installments on their furniture. Ward got sour on her going out with her lodgers, real nice folks they were, who kept on staying just on her account, but at last they had to go, because Ward acted like a wild man when he came home drunk. The reason Belle had to go to the hospital was that he struck her, beat her, another time he was drunk, and of course the baby died, but no one made any complaint. Don't you see, a lot of the trouble is made by people living on tick? If I couldn't pay, I'd starve."

"Well, I know, of course, that Jack would never beat me, or get drunk, but still it costs so much to live, so Jack says," and her sigh was a little deeper.

"Of course, it does, but you have enough, if you are willing to go without things you don't need."

"I'm willing enough," Jennie said in a low tone. The future was coming nearer, and in her brain began to form the image of a home, with their own things, and Jack with her, the Jack who was so much to her.

"You see this going out all the time costs like the dickens, and it ought to be saved for furniture. Don't buy on installment. Get your things piece by piece, and then it's yours."

That brilliant blush was so sweet on the girl's face, that Kit felt like kissing her every time it came like a beautifying light into the soft cheeks, seeming to reveal the pure thoughts and innocent soul. Jennie hesitated a moment, then she said softly:

"Jack has bought a chair and a table, and I——" then she pulled open the lowest drawer, and fumbling, drew out a bundle. With dancing eyes she opened it, and displayed half a dozen saucers, daintily colored with sprays of rosebuds.

"Why, Jennie!" was Kit's enthusiastic comment.

"I'm going to buy the whole set," Jennie whispered. "I'm going to get six of everything."

"That's the reason you worked overtime?" Kit asked.

Jennie nodded, carefully wrapping up her treasures, and hugging up the bundle a moment before putting it away.

"You see, dear, how happy you will be," Kit said, as though to clinch an argument.

"Don't you think I know it," Jennie cried indignantly, "but I can't expect any fellow to want to set up housekeeping with me or any one else on a chair, a table and six saucers, can I?"

"You have a beginning," was Kit's sage reply, as they put on their coats and hurried out of the door, for this was a night when they were to meet the boys.

As they entered the drug store, the place of meeting, they saw Jack swing in from the shelter of the grocery store across the street, and Phil, a moment later, crossed the street from a saloon.

The faces of both were bruised, but as the girls had been given the same explanation afforded the chief clerk, they thought nothing of that fact, but Kit was very quick at putting things together, and she noticed that they did not come together. She had a plan in her mind, however, and after greetings were exchanged, she managed, as it was easy for her to do, to thrust Phil on Jennie and walk off with Jack.

"Don't act so silly," she said, laughingly, to him, as he sulked by her side. "I must tell you something about Jennie."

Instantly the frown vanished, and Jack asked quickly: "Good girl, Kit, what is it?"

And then Kit spoke out her mind, repeating all the arguments she had used to Jennie, Jack buffeting them with his own.

"It's shameful to let knowledge of the meanness of the world come to that little thing," she cried at last.

"God! Don't you think I want to marry her? I want to put her where she won't have things hard. I don't care about myself, it's just her."

"But you don't. And then, too, Jack, you ought to protect her from yourself. Long engagements are bad, and she has only me to stand between it all and herself, and ——" Kit was beginning, when Jack clutched her arm so hard that it was bruised for many a day.

"Don't you dare to even hint such a thing! Hell, to think of harming my girl in any way like that! Why, Kit Nelson, I'd rather forgive murder first. I can see how a man in awful rage might kill another, but what you are trying to talk about, well I guess not, and if you try to put any such notions in Jennie's mind, making her think I'm that kind of a fellow, she shan't stay with you."

"That's just it, Jack, boy, you can take her away from me, who can only do my little to protect her, for you are all right with her. There is where her danger lies," and while Jack clenched his hands and swore fiercely, he saw that there was a good deal of common sense in Kit's warning, after all.

"I'll strike for higher salary," he said at last.

"And if you don't get it?" Kit whispered.

"I'll get it, or something will happen," was his reply, real hatred showing on his handsome face, as the light from a window they were passing fell upon it.

"And then, Jack, there's something else. Phil loves Jennie."

"What?" the question was fired as from a gun.

"He does, and he has some plan or other, and Jack," Kit's voice trembled a little, "Phil don't love girls to marry them, and I am so afraid for poor Jennie," and tears ran down Kit's face, and she wiped her nose vigorously.

"By God, Kit, stop, or you'll make me into a perfect devil! Phil, trying to get my little girl! Don't tell me any more or there'll be murder in my heart. Men have killed for less than that," he muttered striding back to the others at a pace which kept Kit running.

When they were reached, Jack found the others walking almost in silence, and it was Kit who had to bridge matters with light chatter, and pretend that Jack was so dull she had come back to Phil. The latter was not a very entertaining companion, though, for he was studying how to avenge himself and secure Jennie.

Jack fumed and hated Phil quite as cordially as Phil did him, and thus matters stood between the erstwhile friends, who tried, however, to keep up a semblance of politeness, and perhaps if the girls had not shared their merry intimacy they would not have noticed anything. Kit understood, and Jennie did not care, for she was then, as always, sure that her Jack was in the right.

CHAPTER VII.

"I saw Jack Forbes last night with Cricket," Tex Warner remarked, carefully blowing the foam from a large glass of beer into the brass spittoon. "He's sure pulling the Cricket up straight, too."

"Jack's a good lad, all right, but he's looking kind of seedy lately. I don't know what's the matter with him," said Bobby Krollman, the bartender.

"Aw, it's that floosie of his," Billy Ramberg remarked. "From what I understand he wants to get married, but thinks he can't afford it. Is she on the square, do you think, Tex?"

"You better think so while Jack's listening," answered Tex.

"Yeh, I know. But Phil Huston said——"

"Never you mind what Phil Houston said. I know what's wrong with him. He's got a grouch on Jack on account of not being in too good standing with little Miss Baker, himself. I guess he thinks Jack knocked him."

"It isn't like Jack to knock anybody," the bartender said. "Not saying because I know, nor because I've exactly heard. I've got an idea that there's something wrong at the office. You know how Jack used always to have something funny to tell us when he came in at night to play cards—something about what had happened at the office. Well, if you notice it he never mentions the office."

"Oh, Bobby," Tex whispered, leaning over the bar. "There's old Carew, his fourth time today. Wait until you see the size of the hooker he takes."

The one in question, after sizing up the glass in front of him, raised the bottle with shaking hand and very accurately filled the glass to the brim.

"Bobby," he whined, "lemme have a little bitters in this, will yuh?"

Tex grinned and Billy chuckled, but both burst into unrestrained laughter as the bartender, with a grave face, said, after solemnly looking at the drink:

"If I do, I'll have to give you another glass."

"Gee! I guess that's going some."

"That's nothing," remarked Bobby, wiping his hands on the bar towel. "A lad came in this morning with one of those big, white bedroom pitchers. Of course, I thought he wanted a quart of beer, and I nearly dropped dead when he says: 'Gimme ten cents whisky.' I says: 'Do you think the pitcher'll hold it?' "

The laugh that followed was brought to an abrupt close by the entrance of Jack Forbes, followed by a young, well-built lad of possibly four-and-twenty, the circles under whose eyes proclaimed worry or dissipation beyond his years.

"Hello, boys," Jack said heartily. "What are you having?"

"Hello, Jack. Hello, Cricket," Bobby said easily. "What's yours?"

"I'm still on the water wagon," Jack smiled, "and I've got a partner now. Cricket hasn't touched a drop for three days, have you old man?"

"Nope," answered Cricket cheerfully, "but I've certainly wanted some these last couple of mornings."

"Working?" asked Tex, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Yep. Getting my $2.75 per, now, down to Thomases."

"I thought Dill Thomas said he'd never give you another job," Billy Ramberg ventured.

"He did, but I guess he changed his mind after Jack, here, saw him."

"Doggone you, Cricket," Jack laughed, flushing, "you promised not to say anything about that. Do you think I want to get every man—jack and his brother in this town a job?"

"Well, I reckon you could do it if you wanted to," Cricket returned stoutly. "Any one that can work around old Dill Thomas can get most any thing."

"That's all right, Cricket, but I couldn't get a job there myself."

"And why? Because he couldn't figure out how you were strong enough to stand the work of throwing brick. That's all."

"Well, the fact remains that I didn't get it."

"Lookit, who's come in," said Billy in a low tone, as two large, mustached men entered and glanced quickly around the saloon. "Wonder who they're looking for."

"Two from Central Office, ain't they, Billy?" Tex asked.

"Yeh. Dugan and Carraway. They're looking for some one, all right."

"I notice that they're raising all particular hell down at Central. Some knocker's been at work and a bunch of games got pulled last night."

"Maybe these lads got something on in the neighborhood," Billy remarked. "I'm glad they've got nothing on me."

"You can't ever tell when they'll get you," Cricket said slowly. "Now look at young Carsey. Nice a little kid as you'd want to see, but they made a crook out of him."

"I don't believe it," said Jack. "If a man takes care of himself—is always on the square—and keeps out of bad company, I think he can certainly keep from getting pinched."

"Well, Jack," Cricket said, rolling a cigarette, "I hope you'll never have personal cause to change your views. I'm going home. Good-night, boys."

"By the way, Cricket," Jack called, "just a minute. I've got something to tell you. Guess I'll walk home with you and I can tell you while we're walking."

They had reached the street now, and Cricket grasped his companion by the shoulders.

"Jack, old man," he said, his voice a trifle husky, "you've got nothing to tell me at all. Oh, I know what you want to walk home with me, for. You think I'll ditch my promise and take a drink of booze if I go alone. No, don't stop me. I want to tell you something." He cleared his throat. "You've done something for me, Jack Forbes, that I'll never forget as long as I live. You've made me think and made me see that I can be a man if I want to, and not a fool. You've showed me what a man can be and you've made it plain that my duty is to the poor little girl at home. You showed me that I was selfish; that after letting my poor little baby go, I was killing my wife. If I make a man of myself, Jack, I owe it to you, and if you ever need a friend you won't have far to go. If any one ever does harm to you or yours, they'll have to settle with the Cricket—that's all," and the young fellows' hands found each other instinctively in the dark and clasped in a strong, hearty pressure.

As Jack walked leisurely down the street on his way home, he experienced a thrill of pleasure.

"Everything does not go wrong," he reflected, "but if the boy only knew it, it was more for Mamie's sake than his own."

And then his thoughts turned to Phil. He tried to remember when he had first noticed the change in the lad who had at first been such a warm friend to him. Was it that he had allowed himself to be influenced by the vague suggestions and suspicions of Jennie and Kit? What was it they didn't like in him? True, Phil drank a bit more than he should have done, but he always acted the gentleman. Ah! the books! But was there anything wrong there? Maybe Phil's

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explanations were true, and he had accused him wrongly.

Suddenly Jack noticed three figures ahead of him, apparently engaged in earnest conversation, and as they passed under the street-lamp Jack's heart gave a sudden bound. It was Phil Houston and the two Central Office detectives he had noticed in the saloon earlier in the evening. What was Phil doing with them? Hardly knowing why he did so, he slipped into a dark passageway between two brick buildings, crouching behind an ash barrel. He was barely out of sight when the three had reached the building, and Jack's heart stopped beating as they paused in front of the entrance. Had they seen him? Straining his ears, he was able to hear fairly well snatches of their conversation, and as they became angrier he could hear all.

"I tell you I can't, Dugan," Phil was protesting, "the game was fierce last night. The house broke several hundred dollars out. I don't know whether the guys were on the square or not, but if they were, they were full of luck. I got beat on every hand I held. It was fierce. Every booster in the house broke loser. You'll have to tell the Captain he'll have to wait for his bit this month. I can't raise it."

"You'll have to get it at the office then, Houston," Dugan said heatedly. "The Cap said it was either that or close the game."

"Damn it, I can't touch for another cent down there, I tell you! That young fool Forbes has got wise that there's something wrong, and if I don't straighten those books out pretty soon he's apt to go to the uncle with it."

"Won't the old man stand for a fifty?" Carraway asked, impatiently.

"Fine chance," Phil remarked sarcastically. "He's crazy with me now about what I've been spending, and it's only my aunt that keeps me from having my allowance cut off altogether."

"Well, there's no two ways about it, Houston," Dugan said harshly. "You get the money or quit—that's all. You can take it or leave it. Besides, some one's been knocking your game downtown, and we're taking an awful chance on you, however you run it."

"They have, have they?" Phil cried. "Well, I can nearly tell you who it is then. It's that young pup down at the office. He's in my way, I tell you," he fairly shouted.

"Whisht, whisht, boy, not so loud!" cautioned Carraway. Some one might hear you. What makes you think it's him?"

"Oh, he's going with a little milk and honey daisy that's working at the same place another one is. This other one is pretty wise to me, although how she got next is more than I can dope out, and I can about figure out that she's put a bug in this Forbes' ear. He knocked me, I'll bet. Damn him!"

"Come on up to Terry's and have a drink, boy. It'll calm your nerves a bit, and we'll see what can be done. There is more than one way of killing a cat, you know."

Hardly had the trio rounded the corner when a white-faced young fellow rose quickly from his place of concealment and glanced at his watch by the light of a match. "Ten-thirty!" he muttered, "I'll find him up yet!" and strode off in the direction of the home of Judge Landers.

CHAPTER VIII.

The night was one of "Chicago's own," rainy, windy and horribly disagreeable, and a strange premonition came to Jack Forbes as he ran lightly up the steps to the old brick house, with its mansard roof indicating the period of its erection—during the sixties. At that time it had been in the suburban outskirts, and it was still occupied by Judge Landers, who loved it from the peaked roof to the deep cellars. Big prices had been offered him, for the land had grown too valuable for mere residence purposes, and the location scarcely desirable for a man of his social standing, but he had scornfully refused to allow the land his father had bought and the house his mother had loved, to be turned into a brick yard, or the rose garden, in which both his mother and wife had planted the darlings of their hearts and trained to wonderful perfection, turned into saloons and low dives.

He was a resolute old man, this Judge, once of the Circuit Court, but long since retired, although he still retained his business which had come to him from his father. Here, where his parents had lived, he lived with his wife and his nephew Philip Houston, when that young man could be induced to be with them. In a long, somber room were his cherished law books, great files of newspapers of the time when he was spoken of frequently as a man of superior judgment, both as a lawyer and judge. In one corner was an old-fashioned safe, in which he nightly locked the books of his establishment, as well as its bonds, cash and valuable documents.

In answer to Jack's vigorous ring there appeared at the door an old, gaunt creature, whose thin gray hair was plastered down around her temples, while her stiff white cap and apron seemed to stand out in starched protest against all manner of dust and dirt.

"Yes, sir," she answered simply, "the Judge is home and will be pleased to see you, Mr. Forbes, I'm sure."

"Thank you, Mance," Jack answered. "I can find my way to the library."

Seated in a massive arm-chair, utterly absorbed in a huge, leather-covered volume, sat the Judge, and Jack hesitated at the threshold, fascinated by the picture the venerable jurist made with the light of the grate fire playing on his features. The high, broad forehead indicated great wealth of knowledge, the snow-white hair was thinning slightly around the temples, and the fine gray eyes and strong-lined face, indicated a kindly, just man, but one who when crossed could display a storm of high feeling. So absorbed was he in his reading that Jack walked in and took a seat, and only when the old gentleman stopped to turn a page, did he disturb him.

"Good-evening, Judge," he said respectfully.

"Ah! How are you, Forbes?"

"I'm very well physically, but mentally I'm a pretty sick man. The truth is, Judge, that I've come to see you on some pretty ticklish business. I wish it were well over with."

"I do not comprehend, Forbes. What is it?" the Judge asked, raising his eyebrows.

"It's about the books at the office. I guess I might as well start at the beginning. Some time ago, while running over the entry book, I happened to run across an entry made in handwriting that was not mine, although it was so near like it that it would take a sharp eye to detect it. It was on an entry to the Rajah people, and I noticed that it was not my 'j.' Not content with this, however, I went back further and detected other errors. Judge, some one is making false entries in that book!"

"A rather serious charge, Forbes. Whom do you suspect?"

"Judge Landers," Jack answered quietly, but firmly, "your nephew, Phil Houston, has been doing the work."

Instantly the Judge was on his feet. His face became fairly livid, as with upraised hand he thundered warningly: "Young man, how dare you? In my house, to make a charge like that! I'll not listen! You ungrateful young scamp! My nephew is invariably doing something for you—asks more favors of me for you than for himself. This is outrageous!"

Jack listened quietly, nor did he speak until several moments after the Judge, worn out by his outburst of temper, was again seated.

"Judge Landers," he said, "you have those books here. Will you please take them from the safe and look them over? I've not made these accusations without being sure that I was right."

And then, with many interruptions from the surprised and outraged Judge, he told the whole story, beginning with the discovery of the discrepancy and the story told by Tommy Telfair, and ending with the events that occurred that evening.

"All I ask," he concluded, "is that you appoint an auditor and have the entry book examined by a handwriting expert."

"Well," acquiesced the Judge, grudgingly, "I suppose that is a fair request, although I do not believe the story in the least."

Jack's face flushed, but he controlled his temper.

"I have another little matter which I wish to speak of, Judge. If you remember, a short time ago I spoke to you in regard to an increase in my salary."

"I think we came to an understanding about that at the time, Forbes," the Judge said coldly.

"Likely we did at that time, but I have a reason which, if you will listen to it for a minute, may convince you that I am worth more to you. Now, Fairfax's work consists of looking up ratings and placing them on each order entered in our books. These ratings are always placed on the first order, anyway. Why cannot I, when the first order of a firm is recorded, place that rating on the card index? This will do away with Fairfax's work, and you know that, to say the least, he is not what might be called a conscientious workman. I would be willing to do this extra work, but I think there should be more money attached to it."

The Judge looked thoughtful, but said nothing.

"And another thing, Judge," Jack said softly and earnestly, "I want to get married, and I don't feel able to on my present salary."

"Wait a minute, Forbes," the Judge said, his temper rising, "for out and out, downright presumption, I may say impudence—yes, nerve—you are unparalleled. First you give me an insane story of false entries in your books, probably made to cover your own peculations. Then you try to show me how to conduct my own business, and tell me who I should discharge and whose salary I should raise. And finally you tell me that you wish to form a matrimonial alliance. The very idea is preposterous! Right along I have been paying you an excellent salary—far more than your services are worth. If you had been careful with your substance you would not now have to ask your employer for charity. And now you wish to marry a woman whom you have been half supporting for the past half-year. Stop, sir!" he thundered, as Jack started to make an angry protest, "did you not buy this young woman shoes? Oh, I have learned it all from my nephew. It seems to me that if you have not found it necessary to marry this young woman up to the present time, you can get along very well without doing so in the future."

Jack Forbes rose to his feet slowly, his face going red and white by turns. His eyes flashed darkly and he approached the Judge with upraised hand. It seemed for a moment as though his rage would goad him into violence on the person of the old man, but his self-control was excellent, and he stepped back to the door. Striving to keep his voice as low as possible, he held the Judge's eyes in his piercing stare.

"Judge Landers," he said, "you have said things that no man can say to me and not regret. Your age alone protects you from a thrashing. I will make you regret that speech as long as you live. Damn you," he said, his temper again bursting forth, "you and your damn dirty nephew will both live to regret this night," and slamming the door behind him he rushed from the house, and his hot flushed face found cooling relief in the gently-sifting flakes of the last spring snow.

CHAPTER IX.

The drizzle had settled into a light snow, preserving certain footsteps on the bricks leading up to Judge Landers' home. These were characteristic, and a dozen in number. A night later and they would not have been retained, for no more snow fell that spring.

The great, tall clock, which the Judge proudly claimed had been in the family for three hundred years, sonorously sounded the half-hour between five and six, but the active figure of the ill-tempered old owner was not to be seen descending the broad stairway, as was his custom, to have a few hours' precious time for studying the books he had accumulated when a law library was a luxury few men could afford. Specially was he fond of reading of the precedents established by those whose names, once famous, but now forgotten, assisted in bringing to its present state the law of our land.

The clock ticked, and was echoed by several others, but otherwise everything was still as death. Yet something must have been wrong, for in the past twenty-five years the Judge had never missed a morning, and he did not know what sickness was.

Rising as early as he did, the Judge always drank one cup of black coffee and ate a single slice of unbuttered bread at six, exactly, and as the hands of the clock crept to that hour, slight noises were heard from the kitchen, where old Mance came along the hall, tray in hand, and opened the door leading to the "Judge's Library," as the room was always called.

"Mighty dark this mornin'," she muttered, knowing that the Judge would not be disturbed, so absorbed was he when wrapped in contemplative study of the decisions of the men of the past.

Some one seemed to be tapping at the window shaded by the lilac bush, but Mance probably did not hear, for she was very old, and set the tray upon the table where she had placed it for twenty-five years.

Having done her part, she started to leave the room, then she was aware that the room was too dark for reading, and that the Judge was not in his place.

She did not notice, however, a white-faced young fellow at the window, a French one opening to the floor, trying to undo the clasp. She never noticed him, for that instant her eyes fell upon something on the floor, something terrible, with ghastly white hair, lying in blood already congealed. Something that had once been her dear master, her petted charge.

Kneeling, her aged lips drawn into a moaning cry, she looked him over. Through the head, that noble head, whose curls sixty years ago had been her joy and pride, the cruel bullet had torn, until it met a bone harder than the others, and raised that ugly lump. The shirt her faithful fingers had made him, as they did all his others, was stained horribly.

Mance was a very old woman, but her love, the only one of her life, for he had been as her own child, made her strong once more, and rising, her hands red with his blood, she sent in a police call, then turned to rouse the household, when her eyes fell tardily upon a white face outside. The eyes of the young man were fixed in weird surprise upon the figure of the murdered man. He was fastened to the spot, so horrified he did not know which way to turn, or was it, as is so often said, because he was fascinated by the sight of one whose death lay at his door?

Mance looked at the face, then uttered a cry of horror: "You were here last night, you did it! I know, I let you in," and on her side she tugged at the catch of the window, but when she finally opened it, there was no one there, although footprints in the snow showed that she had not been mistaken. Being old and ignorant of such matters, unfortunately, she did not realize the importance of these, but utterly obliterated them by walking over them, looking in every direction, and sobbing bitterly, her white hair blown across her face, suddenly as white as that of the murdered man.

Absorbed by her grief and the search for the man she had seen, Mance delayed rousing the remainder of the household, and the policemen arrived before any one was awake, save the servant herself.

As she opened the door to them, she heard Phil calling:

"What noise is it? Mance, what's this?" and looking up, she could see Phil leaning over the banister, his pink silk pajamas showing about his fair face and rumpled light hair, making him almost as pretty as a girl.

"Yes," came the quieter tones of Mrs. Landers, as she started down the stairs, wrapped in a down dressing gown, her feet thrust in slippers.

"Yes, what did you send a call for?" grunted the representatives of the law, pushing by Mance and closing the door behind them, for the air was very cold.

Mance was past talking. The chords of her throat were so congested that she could only point with her bloody hands toward the open door of the "Judge's Library," and continue to cry.

With pompous tread the officers stalked into the room, taking in the prostrate figure, smeared with blood, the little lunch, and the swinging window.

"He do be getting out this windy," one of them stated emphatically.

Because such was his opinion, the other officer decided upon one of his own, and shook his head gravely.

"Remember them footprints on the front steps? the ones I told you to watch out for?"

"Yes."

"Them was his."

Mrs. Landers, white as the silent figure, asked softly: "Did you find him this way, Mance?"

Poor Mance could only nod.

"And whin?" the officer asked with authority.

The stern voice of the man in blue scared the poor old woman so that she managed to gasp:

"This morning. When I brought in this," pointing to the lunch, which would never be eaten.

In a few words Mrs. Landers told of her husband's custom, while both officers let their eyes roll about the room, and before she finished, both strode to the safe. It had been opened, although that had taken no skill, for its lock was no more protection than that of an ordinary door, and there was nothing in the interior. Its contents were gone.

"Straight case," one of the men said, and the other nodded, and then both took up the swinging window.

"I say, that looks bad, don't it?" Phil broke in, joining them, although his pink pajamas showed above the coat he had hastily thrown about him, and dragged from beneath his trousers and over his neat slippers. Few, however, had ever seen the young man in so disordered a condition, and one of the officers noticed that the hair about his neck was still damp from sleep.

"I say, Mance, come here, old girl, and tell about this," he said gently, holding out his hand to the servant. Next to the Judge, Phil Houston occupied her heart.

Under his questions she gave a very good account of her discovery of the face at the window, her accusation, and the flight of the owner of the face, and her chase.

"Were there any footprints here?" asked one of the officers.

When she replied that there had been, the officer groaned: "Fairly wiped out!" And that was true, for search as they might, no outline remained that could serve as a single clew.

The officers then examined the footprints outlined in the snow, and all the while, Phil assisted them all he could, his manner being just what any one might have expected under such agonizing conditions. As soon as the officers were through with his aunt, he insisted upon her retiring to her room, and seeing how utterly broken she was, he took her gently in his arms and carried her upstairs, kissing her as he laid her on her bed. As he did so, the tears came, and she clung to him:

"Phil, Phil, I cannot, cannot stand it!" she sobbed.

A peculiar expression came into the young man's eyes, but pressing his cheek to hers, he replied:

"You just have to, Auntie," then hastened downstairs. As he reached the bottom he heard some hasty words, the sharp command of the officer, then a voice very familiar crying angrily: "I didn't do it! I won't go with you! I tell you I am innocent!"

The door was pushed open, and a confused group of men stumbled in, in the center being a wildly struggling young fellow, hatless, his clothes torn, and face bleeding. The latter was the result of a blow from an officer's stick.

"Show him the body!" suggested a wiry little chap, whom Phil had no difficulty in recognizing as Tommy, the office boy.

"None of you enter that room," commanded the officer who had been placed in charge, through the 'phone.

"Yes, let me see the body. You'll see that I do not shrink from it. There is no reason for my doing so, for I am innocent," cried the young fellow whom the officers were guarding.

Phil, who had been standing speechless, now came up, the officers falling back, and looking at the disheveled, wild-appearing prisoner, said, his face ghastly with emotion:

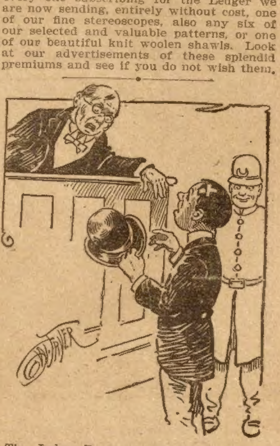
"It can't be! Jack Forbes, what are these men doing with you?"

"Oh, Phil!" fell from Jack's lips, and forgetting the events of the previous evening, his hand clasped the other's. Phil then asked that they wait until he dressed to go with Jack, and so great seemed his influence with the officers that they did wait, allowing Jack to sit down.

In a few moments Phil returned, bringing a coat and hat with him, which he insisted Jack should wear, and as they passed through the door the old clock sounded the half-hour between seven and eight.

However, in spite of all that Phil did, Jack was held. Afterward he passed through the agony of the sweat box, or the Third Degree. Phil said that he had never been more astonished in his life, and seemed so upset that many who had known the two young men were touched at his devotion to one, who by his own confession was a criminal, and had murdered the uncle of his nearest pal.

This thrilling and remarkable story will be continued in next week's Ledger, giving the reader chapters filled with dramatic situations of the very highest interest. To every one subscribing for the Ledger we are now sending, entirely without cost, one of our fine stereoscopes, also any six of our selected and valuable patterns, or one of our beautiful knit woolen shawls. Look at our advertisements of these splendid premiums and see if you do not wish them.



The Judge—Do you mean to state, sir, that the blow you received from the first attack raised a bump of such preposterous proportions as you describe?

Complainant—I do, your honor, and I could have proved it had not the second blow struck in the same place and flattened the swelling.

Too True.

Father (severely)—My son, this is a disgraceful condition of affairs. This report says you are the last boy in a class of twenty-two.

Henry—It might have been worse, father; there might have been more boys in the class.

Married in Masque;

OR, OPAL DAYNE'S TERRIBLE MISTAKE

By T. C. HARBAUGH

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE HUNTED MAN.

Opal Calvert stood in the little room she had scarcely left since the flight of her husband and the burial of her father. The whole country still felt the excitement of these two events, and three days had passed since the last rites over the old Colonel.

Nothing had been heard of Mark Calvert, though the region, even the intricacies of the Black Swamp, had been scoured for him without avail. The man had disappeared as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. Notwithstanding the opinion of Doctor Sample to the effect that the Colonel had died from excitement and not by the hand of her husband, Opal believed that something had happened at the interview which was accountable for her parent's taking off.

The Crimson Caps were foremost on the trail of the man whose flight had taken him from their power, for was not Colonel Dayne a brother of the Clan? They had settled his doom and Opal felt relieved to know that this tragedy had been averted by the vanishment of the man who had duped her by the infamous marriage in masque.

The faint light of the stars came in at one of the windows of the little room, and the fair girl stood at the window which overlooked the lawn where the magnolias were waving gently in the wind. It was good to be alone, alone with her thoughts, and her sole visitor was Diana, who came now and then to talk of the all absorbing subject.

"They have found him," suddenly cried a voice as the door was flung open and Diana made her appearance on the threshold.

Opal started as if a bomb had fallen at her feet.

"They have found whom?"

"Mr.—I mean Mark Calvert."

"No? Where is he?"

"They have him hemmed in in the little brake."

"It cannot be. He must have gone farther than that," said the disbelieving girl. "I cannot think that he remained so near all the time."

"The dogs found an old trail, and Nick Crocket did the rest," confirmed Diana.

"And when are they going to close in on him?"

"Tonight."

"It is night, now."

"Yes, but they are not quite ready, Nero says. You know what they will do, Miss Opal?"

Well did she know, and to her husband.

"I met Mr. Brinton as I came up the road," continued the yellow girl.

"Guy?" and then Opal stopped sudden.

"He told me to tell you that he has kept his word; he has not joined in the search."

"Did he tell you this, Diana?"

"Yes, and without my asking him, either. He has no love for Mark Calvert, but for your sake, that is the way he said it, he did not join the men."

"I thank him," was all Opal said as she turned to the window again.

Just then the clear tones of the old knocker sounded in the room, and Diana hurried below.

In another moment she reappeared at the door.

"It is Miss Ruby," announced the yellow girl.

"Tell her to come up. I will see her here," said Opal.

In another minute footsteps ascended the staircase, and Opal watched the door, standing like a statue in her tracks on the carpet. Why had Ruby come after their last exciting interview? What had brought the girl back to Riverside at this time?

The door opened and Opal saw the form of her neighbor, in the room.

For a moment the two women stood face to face, and Ruby advanced, her face white and seamed with excitement. She had passed a sleepless night, as her eyes indicated, and her voice trembled when she spoke.

"I have kept away till now, but my thoughts were with you," she said, looking at Opal. "I wanted to come to you in the moment of your great sorrow, but I could not find the heart to intrude."

In an instant the hands of Opal went forth, and they stood in the starlight looking into each other's face, but saying nothing, as if the hour was too holy to be broken by speech.

"You have heard the latest news?" said Ruby.

"If you mean that they have tracked him down, yes. Diana has just told me. Is it true?"

"He is in the little brake."

"Why did he not go away?"

"Perhaps, because you were so near. You are his wife, Opal."

"To my shame, be it said."

"But his wife just the same. They are now advancing upon his retreat and if they get him you know what will happen."

"I do know."

"The Crimson Caps lead the way. And those men are merciless."

"Is he alone in the brake?"

"It is thought that Nobb Carew and one or two others are with him."

"And that means a fight to the death."

"It surely does," responded Ruby Barton. "There will be more blood in this county."

"How much start have the Crimson Caps?"

"I saw them ride over the hill, but ten minutes ago. But you are not going to interfere, Opal?"

"What could I do against those determined men?" asked Opal Calvert. "They would not listen to me. They are avenging, as they believe, the death of a brother."

"How's that?"

"My father was a Crimson Cap."

"This is startling. I never suspected that."

A smile came to the ashen lips of Opal, of Riverside.

She stepped to her couch and drew from beneath a pillow an object at sight of which, her visitor uttered a wild cry.

"What is that? Your father's crimson cap?"

"No, it is mine!"

"Yours?"

"Yes."

"He left it to you? I see."

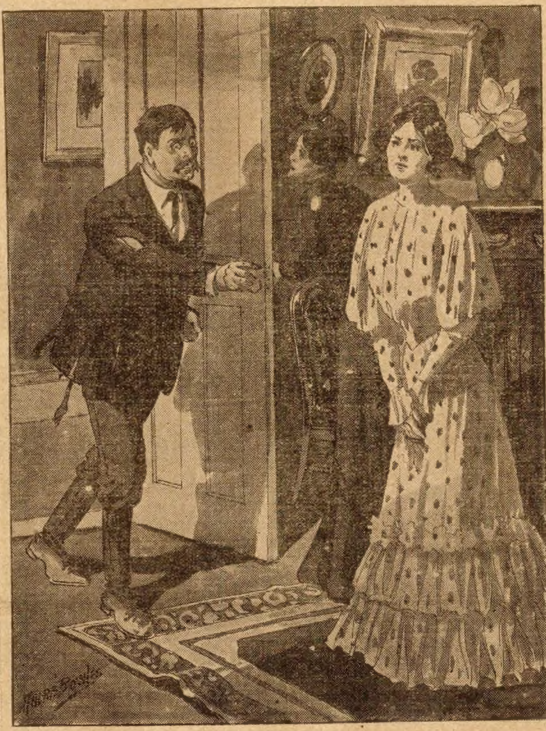
"No, it is mine by the right of initiation," came from Opal's lips. "I am a Crimson Cap."

Miss Barton was too horrified to speak. Her gaze wandered from the insignia to the drawn face of her companion.

"When did you get hold of it?"

"The night father lay in his first death stupor. The agent of the Clan came to Riverside and bade me follow him. I did so and they made me one of their number."

"Then you have a right to ask, if you will at their hands the life of your husband."



It was Mark Calvert.

"I have the right, but think of those men. They would not humor me. Much as I blame Mark Calvert for his dastardly work which made me his wife, I would not see him die like a hunted dog. But against these men I am powerless."

Opal flung the cap upon the bed, and turned again to her companion.

"He may escape," said she.

"Escape, whither? Who in all this county would shield that hunted man? Who would dare extend a hand of help to Mark Calvert?"

"Would you, Ruby. You remember what you told me once."

"I love him still, but he is yours now."

"And the stars must have hid their faces when he made me his wife."

There came from below the opening of a door. It closed softly, but the sound did not escape the ears of the two women.

"It is not Diana," said Opal as footsteps came up the stair two steps at a time.

"It is more news, perhaps," ejaculated Ruby.

Opal crossed the room and laid her hand on the latch. But she got no further, for at that moment the door flew open, and she reeled back with a startling cry.

Ruby, too, fell back from the apparition that confronted both of them, and her eyes seemed to start from her head.

"Merciful Heaven!" she exclaimed.

As for Opal, she stood in the middle of the room, her gaze riveted upon the intruder.

It was Mark Calvert, with the grime of of the little brake upon him, with his face torn by the sharp briers, and his hands bleeding from the race for life. Truly, he was a hunted man with the pack at full cry at his heels.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

The room seemed to swim before the eyes of Colonel Dayne's daughter.

Suddenly Mark Calvert threw out his bleeding hands in a gesture of appeal, and his lips, till that moment, silent as if he were struggling with his inmost soul, cried out:

"My wife!"

Opal uttered a cry at these words, and the last vestige of color fled preciptantly from her face.

"I see," he went on. "You repudiate the relation, and I don't blame you. But I had to come to you as the last resort. I have come first to crave your forgiveness and to seek what may be my last asylum."

Still, not a word came from Opal Calvert.

"They have found me," he continued. "I did not kill your father. It was not my hand that took his life. Doc Sample was right. I believe he was dead before I pressed him back into the chair."

"But why did you fly?"

"Let that be my secret," said Mark. "If you will give me fighting room here, I will show the human wolves of Mississippi how a Calvert can die. It was not good fighting ground in the brake. I had nothing at my back, but here is a wall and a window and a staircase to defend. They are not far behind me. Carew can hold them at bay, but a little while and then they will track me here. But if you, my wife—wife against your will and my low chicanery—will give me shelter, I shall ask nothing better."

She pitied him, this man who had blighted her life and debased her in her own eyes. He had been driven to the wall by the Crimson Caps, and she doubted not that he was responsible for the death of her father, yet in that moment of his peril, poor wretch that he was, her heart—it was a woman's heart, after all—went out to him.

Mark Calvert averted his face as if he were listening to the tread of his enemies.

"When will they be here, think you?" asked Opal.

"Before thirty minutes."

"What would you do if you were to escape them?"

"I would wage war against the whole set,"

"Here?"

"In this county. You don't know what I would do. I can summon to my assistance some of the most desperate men in Mississippi. I am the last of the Calverts. My life has not been as bright nor as pure as a sunbeam. But what are the Crimson Caps?"

In reply Opal drew from the bed the insignia of the Clan which she held up to the startled gaze of her hunted husband.

"In God's name, how came that in your hands?" he exclaimed.

"By right of initiation."

"You, my——"

The word he would have uttered, died on his lips.

"I am your wife, so you need not fear to speak the name you have just kept back. I am a Crimson Cap."

"You joined it to get even with me, I suppose."

The words ended with a sneer which curled his lip proudly, and his gaze fell to the crimson cap.

"I hardly knew when I became a member, for the excitement bewildered me. I am under the laws of the Clan. I have sworn to obey them in every particular."

"And they have outlawed me."

"Yes. You are blacklisted by the Crimson Caps, and you know what that means."

"Who does not?"

Opal cast the cap upon the floor and bade Ruby go to the window.

"Now," she continued, going up to her husband. "Tell me the truth. You heard us by the road the night before the wedding?"

"You——"

"Guy Brinton and myself."

"I overheard you—your plans, everything."

"And that gave you the opportunity you wanted?"

"Yes."

"You waylaid Guy?"

"Why should I lie to you when I may speak but a few more words in this world? I did not waylay him personally."

"You had it done?"

"Carew and Trumble."

"Your tools? I see. It was for revenge upon my father?"

"Yes, it was the old feud."

"Who shot him in the Ghost's Hollow?"

"I do not know."

"Upon your honor, Mark Calvert?"

"Upon the honor of a man, as I still claim to be."

"But you would not have warned him had you known?"

"I would not have warned him."

Opal's lips seemed to meet hard behind the last word of her reply:

"You are a greater villain than I thought you."

"Those are not very nice words from one's wife," and Mark broke into a little laugh. "But we waste time. If I have no fighting room here, I can at least go out and be riddled in the open."

"I have not sent you adrift yet," answered Opal. "Do you see any one yet, Ruby?"

The girl at the window shook her head.

"Now, Mark Calvert, what is the meaning of a sealed paper which I discovered but this morning in papa's private desk."

"How should I know?"

"It contained your name."

"My name? Indeed, you mystify me, Mrs. Calvert."

It seemed to give him devilish pleasure to call her his wife, and in the desperate situation he found himself.

"I cannot enlighten you much," Opal replied. "Your name was in the paper, and the name of a woman."

"I am still in the dark."

"You have been to Okolona?"

"Yes," with a start.

"Did you meet there a Miss De Villiers?"

He realized all in a moment.

"Yes," came through his teeth, as it were. "I met a Miss Gloria De Villiers there and I married her. But she is dead."

"Then the paper lies," said Opal coldly. "If it tells the truth Gloria De Villiers lives, and is still your wife, as am I."

Just then there was a little cry from the watcher at the window.

"They are in sight," said Ruby Barton. "I can make out horsemen on the rise."

"The Crimson Caps," ejaculated Colonel Dayne's child.

Mark Calvert's hand sought his hip, and the next moment he stood like one already at bay, with a cocked revolver in his hand.

"I am to have no chance, but I guess I deserve none," came over his bloodless lips. "Good-by, Opal. I can go down and add another tragedy to the history of the last of my line."

"They are riding straight toward the house," came from the one at the window. "I cannot count them, but there must be at least twenty."

Mark Calvert moved toward the door, but suddenly Opal sprang before him and stood against the portal.

Her mien was proud and defiant. She resembled some maid of olden time defying the enemies of her race.

"Remain where you are!" she said to Mark, in tones of command. "This is my house."

"But I have blighted your life."

"I'll admit that."

"I duped you into an infamous marriage."

"Yes."

"You hate me."

"As I hate all sin. I am your wife, Mark Calvert, God save the name, but you are tonight a poor hunted wretch, hunted for his many sins, which some day may God blot out, and I cannot see you die at the hands of the Crimson Caps in the house of your wife."

"Opal——"

"Silence! Ruby, where are they now?"

"They are dismounting on the lawn. The leader is nearly on the porch."

The tread of heavy boots came to the ears of the three in the upper room.

"Move not!" said Opal to her husband. "Remain where you are. Your wife commands it!" And she opened the door and went down the stairs, her face as white as the snow upon Alpine peaks.

"What a woman! She should have killed me on sight," said Calvert to himself.

CHAPTER XIX.

GLORIA.

Opal was half way down the stair when

there came to her ears the sound of heavy knuckles at the door. The young girl paused, and her heart seemed to leap into her throat. She knew that the Crimson Caps had come for Mark Calvert.

In another moment she was at the bottom of the flight, and then——

"They must not get him!" passed through her mind.

"Open the door!" demanded a voice which she thought she recognized.

She did not speak.

Diana appeared in the hall and caught sight of her mistress white faced on the steps.

"Open the door," said Opal.

The yellow girl obeyed and came face to face with a man, well-known in the district.

"It is Morgan Stanley," said Opal, and then she caught the man's glance.

"What is it?" asked Dayne's daughter.

"You must know," was the reply. "He is here. We have come for Mark Calvert."

"He is here."

Stanley looked at the girl and then seemed to halt. Why should she shield him? The trick marriage was known all over the county, and here the duped bride was standing between the scoundrel and retribution. It was more than the Crimson Cap could understand.

"He is here, I say," repeated Opal. "But you cannot have him, Morgan Stanley."

"Why not? He has been blacklisted by the Crimson Caps."

"That is true."

The man was all the way in now, and his countenance was a study.

"You are one of us," he said in lowered tones. "You have sworn to obey the mandates of the order."

"Yes, I have sworn that. But this man is my husband."

A little laugh that went to Opal's heart was the man's reply.

"You forget easily."

"I have forgotten nothing."

"Yet, you stand between justice and this man."

"Yes."

Opal moved up one step, and for the first time Morgan Stanley saw the weapon that glittered in her hand.

"We have come for this rascal," he said. "He has been doomed for his many crimes by the Crimson Caps."

"Your court is not a legal court of justice."

"It is a court of vengeance. What are you going to do, girl? Shall we have this man?"

"Not with my consent!"

Meanwhile, in the little room above stood Mark Calvert hearing faintly the parley below.

Ruby Barton at the window, stood white faced and breathless alone with the man whom she loved and who had turned her off for the other woman tricked into a marriage from motives of revenge.

She turned and caught the desperateness that showed on Mark Calvert's face.

"They will get you after all, Mark," she said.

"Not without a fight," came through clinched teeth.

"You cannot beat off the men below. They are too many for you."

"I know, but the hunted wolf can die game."

Ruby crossed the room and looked out upon a sloping roof, after which she turned toward Calvert again.

"There is escape here," she said pointing at the window.

Calvert shook his head.

"You have but to go over the roof. It is not a great drop to the ground. They are in front of the house. It will give you a chance."

Calvert made a defiant gesture.

"I will not go!" he said.

"Opal, your wife, cannot hold them back."

"I will not go, I say."

Hope faded from Ruby's eyes.

"She is coming back," continued the girl from across the hills. "She has failed."

At that moment the door opened and Opal presented herself in the room.

"They are here, as you know," she said, looking at her husband. "I cannot keep them at bay."

"Then let us begin the battle at once."

Calvert moved toward the door, but Opal threw herself before him with a gesture of refusal.

There was a clatter of feet below, and all knew what it meant.

Mark threw out his hand, but Opal waved it off.

"Good-by!" he said. "There's not another woman like you in all this world. I am going down and die like a man before them, but I will not die alone."

She would not let him at the latch, for her back was against it, and in her eye burned the fierce light of resistance.

"You owe me nothing but hatred," he went on. "You owe me the hate of a seared heart. I am not your husband."

"No?"

The girl seemed to grasp at some fleeting phantom of hope.

"I am not your husband," he went on. "You have spoken of Gloria De Villiers."

"The name I found among the papers in papa's desk?"

"Yes."

"I married that woman last summer."

"You are a greater villain than I thought you."

"Yes, of course. A man cannot have two legal wives in this country. I have thought that Gloria was dead, but your father proved the contrary."

Just then the voice of a man beyond the door, came thrillingly to the ears of all.

"Open the door for a woman. She wants to see Mark Calvert."

The two women in the room looked breathlessly at Calvert, but he did not speak.

"Open, and let the woman in," said the same voice outside. "She has just arrived."

Opal turned to the door and laid her hand on the latch.

"Shall I let her in?" she asked with a glance at her husband.

"Yes."

"Where is the woman?"

"Here, just outside the door."

Opal opened the portal and fell back at sight of a frail, but beautiful creature, who sprang into the room.

She halted at sight of the tableau that met her gaze, and then her glance sought and found the hunted man.

"At last!" she cried as her hands went out imploringly to the man of crime.

"Gloria!" was all that fell from Calvert's lips in response, and then they were glued together again.

"Your wife?" said Opal.

"My husband!" exclaimed the newcomer. "This man is my husband. Who are you?"

"His wife, as well."

The little color still left on the cheeks of the young girl fled ere Opal had finished her brief sentence.

"It cannot be while I live," she answered. "Mark, Mark, tell me all. I am your wife, your legal one."

Calvert fell back and shrank from the hands of the girl who had come at the eleventh hour.

"Open the door! We cannot parley over this man's life forever."

It was the stern voice of the Crimson Cap.

Calvert pushed away the girl who would have embraced him, and with the demeanor of a desperate man, went toward the door.

Opal slid away and let him reach it. She knew what was coming.

He caught the latch, but with a wild cry of love Gloria De Villiers threw herself upon him and dragged him back.

"I have always loved you, Mark!" she cried. "Now that I have found you again we shall not part. Those men below shall not have you, no matter what you have done since we parted."

With the power of a giant he shook her off, and she fell forward with a cry of despair.

Opal and Ruby saw him open the door, and then came the glitter of a revolver as his hand shot forward.

The next moment the room rang with a loud report.

CHAPTER XX.

WHITHER THOU GOEST I WILL GO.

Guy Brinton stood in one of the rooms of his house some miles from Riverside and looked out upon the growing dusk that was casting the place in shadow.

A week had passed since the events last described; and the district had settled down after the vengeance of the Crimson Caps. Doc Sample had just left the plantation and Brinton was thinking of his visit and the gossip he had left behind.

Suddenly there came across his porch the sound of footsteps, and he turned his face toward the door.

"Come in," he said in response to the knock that reached his ears.

"You?" he exclaimed the next instant, as the figure of Opal presented itself.

"Why not?" was the reply. "You would not come to me."

"I have had no invitation to come," said he.

"No? I had not sent for you yet——"

She paused as if she did not care to finish the sentence.

"I am going away."

Brinton started and went forward.

"Take a seat and tell me all," said he. "You are going away?"

"Yes. I shall sell Riverside. In fact, though the country does not know it, papa was heavily involved, but there will be a mite for me after all is settled."

"I did not know——"

"Nor did I," broke in Opal. "It was one of his secrets and I am sure he would not have told me. The creditors have come and Riverside must go. I shall make a living for myself far from the scenes of my troubles, and I have come to say good-by."

Her voice did not tremble and Brinton knew that hers was the courage of the Man of Gettysburg.

"I have heard all," he said. "I did not move from the house during the last events, but I have thought of you."

"Yes? And after what I did that night."

"It was not your fault—Opal."

"It was my fault, for did I not propose the marriage in masque, and that was the beginning of the tangle?"

"Let us forget all that."

"I cannot. It haunts me like the ghost of some murdered friend. You know what Mark Calvert said before the end came?"

"I have not heard that, though Sample told me a good deal."

"It was not his hand that shot papa. It was Mark at the plantation the night I shot the cap from a man's head, and it was his cap, at that. He sent the men who captured you to their task, and you went to the Black Swamp to be guarded by Nobb Carew——"

"And to be rescued by you, Opal."

"Yes. I was then Mark Calvert's wife, or thought I was, although the girl Gloria was the only true one."

"What has become of Gloria?"

"She has taken possession of the plantation, for Mark Calvert made a will before he died. He would have given me much, but I would not hear of such a thing. Gloria is a good girl and has had her troubles. Let her have sunshine for the rest of her life."

"Had you taken him at his intentions, you need not go away now."

"I could not touch what rightfully belonged to Gloria Calvert!" cried Opal quickly. "It is all right. I have renounced the Crimson Caps, though they have refused to accept my renouncement. But I must say good-by, and depart."

She held out her hand, which was ungloved, and Brinton took it in his ample palm.

Their faces were near together and, despite the dusk that had crept into the house, they could look into each other's eyes and see the souls of both.

"Diana wants to go along, but I shall not take her," continued Opal. "The girl has been faithful, but I cannot think of connecting my future fortunes and trials with her. After all, life is more than half shadow."

"It is ourselves that make the shadows," he answered. "We can make the sunshine as well."

She averted her face, and he saw a deep flush suffuse the cheeks of the woman whom he loved.

"I will sell out the little plantation," said he.

Her face came back to him, and he saw at her mouth the semblance of a smile.

"You will sell? I thought you were settled here?"

"I was, but of late, events have rendered this country uncongenial to a man of my temperament."

The smile vanished, and a look of pity came into Opal's eyes.

"Whither would you go?" she asked.

"That depends upon yourself."

"You must not link your fortunes to the fortunes of a foolish woman."

"You are not Mrs. Calvert now, but Opal Dayne."

"But, I am still the foolish, romantic girl who proposed the masked marriage which did all the mischief."

"And I am the man who loves you still."

Opal found him looking down into her face with the old love look of the past. She tried to disengage her hand, but his clasp seemed one of steel, and she desisted.

"We will go away together," he went on. "If there is to be a removal from Riverside there will be one from Crowcrest. We will keep Diana with us and——"

Opal checked him with a little gesture that sent a thrill of joy to his heart.

"It shall be a marriage in masque, if you say so, dearest," he resumed.

"Not that! not that!" exclaimed the beautiful girl. "We will not repeat the folly of the past."

They passed out upon the porch and felt the breath of the gloaming on their faces. The wind came up through the magnolias, and the white flowers on the little lawn lifted their heads, as if to see that love, after its trials and tragedy, had come back to his own, and that there would be no going from the old homeland.

In the days that came Brinton redeemed Riverside, uniting his own estate with it, and when he stood with Opal at the altar there were no masks, and good Parson Bascom looked into the faces of the handsomest couple that had crossed his threshold in many a day.

"This is the last of the dark romance," said Opal one day, as she dropped a mask into the flames on the hearth. "I have kept this memento of a girl's giddiness till now, and from this day through love I shall look out of a woman's soul upon the true sunshine of life."

And Gloria, who had come over from Calvert Roost, as the plantation was called, smiled and hoped that her own life had seen its last shadow, while Ruby Barton, who had loved with the strength of a young girl's passion, the black sheep of the Calvert flock, was trying to forget the past in the love of a young man who would prove worthy of her.

The end.

The Day's Fable.

One day the Fox went to the Lion as the ruler of all the beasts in the forest and said:

"Oh, wise and just decider of all disputes, I have suffered wrong and injustice until I have finally decided to lay the matter before you."

"You don't look as if you were suffering much," replied the Lion, "but go ahead and state your case. I am ever ready to hear and decide."

"It is this, oh, compendium of wisdom. You know that I love the Hare."

"That is, you love to eat her?"

"Yes, that's what I meant. There is nothing in my opinion to equal fricasseed Hare. You also know that the Hare is bobtailed?"

"Such is my observation."

"Well, I pursue her. I gain on her. I get within a foot of her, and I can get no nearer and have to give up the chase. If she only had a tail a foot long I could seize it and she would be mine. I think you see the point—I think you do."

"Yes, I have a glimmering of it. What is it you desire?"

"That you should issue an edict to the effect that all Hares at once proceed to grow tails a foot long. I ask it in the name of justice and fairness."

The Lion said that he wanted a day to think the matter over, and he took it and the next day sent for Reynard and announced:

"I see the justice of your claim, and I have decided to issue the edict you asked for."

"Son of Wisdom, but thou are great!" exclaimed the Fox.

"And I have further decided," continued the Lion—"I have decided in fairness to the long-tailed Hares, to issue an edict that all the Foxes are to have their teeth drawn from this date on!"

Moral:

The trap we set for the other feller often catches our own feet.

He Took Chances.

A good old-fashioned surprise party was given in the West Side recently. After the others had turned theirs over to the hostess, one young man still lugged a package of refreshments under each arm. Finally a young woman asked:

"Why don't you give those things to Mrs. Green?"

"Not on your life!" exclaimed the cautious youth. "The last surprise party I went to we all did that and then the old man came in and said Wilson's house around the corner was on fire. We ran out to see the fire, but there wasn't any. And when we went back the doors were locked. So your Uncle Henry will just clutch these eatables till we are called to the trough. See?"

PANTRY CLEANED

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A doctor said:

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"When we were married two years ago, Postum was among our first order of groceries. We also put in some coffee and tea for guests, but after both had stood around the pantry about a year untouched, they were thrown away, and Postum used only.

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Among other fatal diseases is old age.

Love is blind, therefore it can't see its finish.

Women are as changeable as men are monotonous.

It takes a dry-goods-box philosopher to make a set speech.

You can't borrow happiness, but it's different with trouble.

No, Alonzo, it isn't polite to hit a man when he has you down.

Instead of regretting yesterday get busy and do something today.

It worries a woman if she can't get some man to worry about her.

When a bachelor meets a widow a little lovemaking is dangerous.

Inability to obtain a seat at the political pie counter begets reform.

You may have observed that opportunity doesn't use a hammer when it knocks.

It is easy for a married man to rejoice over the birth of twins—next door.

A girl is seldom interested in a young man unless she declares that she isn't.

Many a man's run-down reputation is due to his fondness for running up bills.

How anxious people are to help you when you are in a position to help yourself!

The road to success is slippery and he who travels thereon needs a lot of sand.

Other people have their weak spots—and perhaps you may have a small one.

A man who travels over the road behind you is in a position to sidestep your missteps.

Some people make an awful fuss about a man being his own worst enemy—but why should they care?

The instinct that causes a woman to attend a murder trial makes a man give up $10 to see a prize fight.

Our idea of a fool man is one who is so busy putting something by for a rainy day that he hasn't time to enjoy the sunshine.

When a man encourages a bunko game he nearly always loses faith in human nature instead of losing faith in his own judgment.

Uncle Sam is having trouble in getting young men to enlist as soldiers, and Chicago has a shortage of young women teachers. What's wrong?

The Crime of the Black Thirteen

By LIEUT. GERALD CARLTON

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE MIRACULOUS ESCAPE.

The murder of the Brooklyn millionaire had borne in its train some very undesirable results. For one thing it had brought Lillian Kingsley very near to death's door. The shock occasioned by the tragedy had completely prostrated her, and but for the close attentions of Miss Beckwith, her illness no doubt would have terminated fatally. As it was there was little hope at first of her recovery; but by careful nursing, however, and the most skillful medical advice, it was thought that Miss Kingsley would pull through in a month, or it might take two or three months before she would be out of danger. Such, at least, was the opinion of her physicians.

Again, through the serious indisposition of Miss Kingsley, Whitcomb Merrivale was given to understand, in very plain language, that he must cease coming to the Kingsley mansion, at any rate, until Miss Kingsley was convalescent.

This unexpected setback had made the big Wall Street operator mad right through and through. Everything turned out so different to what he had expected. The murder of the millionaire was certainly the most undesirable thing that could have happened, so far as Mr. Merrivale was concerned. True, he had an unwilling ally in Mr. Kingsley, but now that the millionaire was dead, he was left pretty much to his own resources.

So Whitcomb Merrivale was desperate; as a matter of fact he didn't know which way to turn; even his lying inventions seemed to turn on him and rend him cruelly.

Truly a pitable state of matters.

In the meantime the operator had made one discovery, for which he could have kicked himself, if that would have done him any good—the discovery that young Cyril Spencer had a double in Brooklyn, on whom he had his man Tom spend money lavishly, so that he could have the report spread about the borough that Cyril bore a bad reputation and was the associate of petty thieves.

This part of the plot, which Merrivale and Tom had built up at such infinite pains and expense, failed completely at the eleventh hour, and, moreover, when he had assured himself of its success. Lillian now knew the truth from Miss Beckwith's lips, after the latter's interview with Cyril at the point overlooking the Wall Street Ferry, and with which the reader has been made acquainted earlier.

In the meantime the real Cyril Spencer had vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed him, to the utter discomfiture of the big operator.

Little wonder was it that Merrivale was mad. He had been balked and disappointed in every way. Still he did not give up the hope of finally forcing Lillian into a marriage with him.

We shall later discover how far he succeeded in his designs.

There are many strange events in a man's life; but one of the strangest of all events happened to Bob Porter, detective.

The reader is already aware that Porter had been inveigled into the timber with Adam Lumley, but he is not aware of the almost miraculous escape the detective had when thus ambushed.

The fact will no doubt be recalled that Porter was finally convinced that the three fleeing figures ahead were the Mansons. He might or might not be correct in this conjecture. It is not for us to say at present whether he was or not.

But the fact that another detective was in the woods at the time simultaneously with Porter and Lumley, saved the former from capture, if not from death.

We described in a former chapter how Porter had been set upon by Darkhurst and his gang, and stricken senseless. This was the exeraordinary part of it; and this was where Porter's marvelous escape came to pass.

In the darkness of the woods, Bob Porter had got separated from Lumley, and thinking that he was still pursuing the Mansons, he went in an opposite direction to that taken by the engineer, with this result that he lost himself in the profound gloom of the timber, Lumley and the three fleeing figures having meanwhile vanished in the deeper recesses.

Now for the other detective who had so unexpectedly come upon the scene—a Brooklyn man who seemed to have taken the case solely for the advantages which might spring from it, having been engaged by no detective agency whatsoever.

This man had been but a brief time following up Rariton Darkhurst's band, but brief as this was he had made some gratifying discoveries.

Not wishing to take the authorities into his confidence and obtain their aid, he continued to work secretly on his own responsibility.

It is enough to say that this man was in the timber keeping close watch on the movements of the Darkhurst band, when the shots were fired at Porter and Lumley, while the latter were still in the road.

The self appointed detective saw the dark figures of the three men fly past him and those in pursuit, and decided that he too would join in the chase.

This was where he made his first perilous misstep, for following close on the heels of the engineer he ran into ambush, and before he could take thought as to what he would next do, he was stricken senseless.

And this was how Bob Porter came to have one of the most providential of escapes.

Now Porter wandered about the timber for some time looking for the engineer. Several times he had heard the sound of voices.

This made Porter more cautious in his movements. He tried to locate the sounds, and when he thought he had succeeded he set about making off in their direction.

From tree to tree the detective went as stealthily as a savage on the war path, finally getting within a dozen yards of where the members of the "Black Thirteen" and their prisoners were.

It was a small open space—a miniature glade in the timber, so to speak.

The moon came out thrice and lighted up the glade. Then Porter caught sight of the bound and insensible captives. There were, besides, nearly a dozen men there, some of the faces of whom the detective could make out distinctly.

Presently he heard Darkhurst order Red and Bertram to hunt up a covered conveyance, so they could remove their prisoners without attracting the notice of the townspeople.

What surprised Bob Porter most was the fact that the Mansons were absent, and not a word had been said with regard to them. It was just possible that he and Lumley were mistaken in respect to the Mansons; if so Porter meant to apologize as soon as possible for the unfounded suspicions with which he identified them with Darkhurst and his band.

After what had occurred Porter decided to move more cautiously, and so collect all the evidence possible to bring about the conviction of this gang of cut-throats.

When Red and Bertram threaded the mazes of the woods on their mission, the detective followed with the stealth and noiselessness of an Indian.

He tracked them along the road, taking advantage of every friendly tree. Not a word of their conversation escaped his alert ears.

Red and Bertram, not dreaming that they were being shadowed, spoke often in strident tones, every syllable of which Porter distinctly heard. No need to repeat their conversation, as the reader is already familiar with it.

Then came the tragis sequel—the drawing of the pistol by Bertram, the wrenching of the weapon from his hand by Red and the murderous blow which had rendered him lifeless.

Bob Porter was strongly tempted at the time to interfere and save the man, but a moment's reflection convinced him that to do so would be an act of the greatest imprudence, for which he would be sorry afterward.

"What does it matter?" he said to himself. "Let them kill each other if they want to; the world will be well rid of them!"

After watching Red drag his victim in among the timber for the purpose of concealment, Porter followed the murderer just as cool and unconcerned as before.

From behind the bole of a great oak tree the detective was a witness to the interview between Jones and the outlaw. He was nearly caught, however, by Jones' unexpected return, and barely saved himself by darting into a clump of bushes until the farmer had retraced his steps.

After that Porter decided to follow Red no farther.

"What's the good," he cogitated. "It won't be a great while when he'll be back with the conveyance." So he decided to return to the woods, and here he concealed himself in the shadow of some bushes to await Red's coming.

Porter wasn't long in his hiding place when he heard the approach of steps.

It was no doubt some of Darkhurst's men hastening to meet the expected vehicle, for the time had already expired when Red and Bertram should have got back.

There was an elm of huge girth close by, to which Porter's attention had been attracted by its almost impenetrable foliage. It did not take him but a brief moment before he was hidden in its branches, and from this vantage point the detective could see without being seen, and what was more to the purpose, hear what was being said.

While there located Porter saw four men emerge from the timber, among them Darkhurst.

Luckily the night had grown much brighter. Even the erstwhile watery moon shone down with placid light. Porter could not have chosen a better position than in the branches of the old elm.

From there the detective could command an excellent view of the road in both directions—toward D——, also in the direction Red had taken, and from which no doubt he would soon return.

The question which appeared now to agitate Darkhurst was whether his men would be successful in obtaining the coveted conveyance; and for several moments he paced up and down impatiently, almost angrily, the two men being much over their time already. Instead of the hour given them, twenty more minutes had elapsed.

Finally Darkhurst beckoned to one of his men—a sturdy broad-shouldered giant.

"Well, cap'n, what's wrong?" growled the fellow. That he didn't appear to stand in awe of Darkhurst was evident.

Porter learned afterward that this man was second in command, and did a good deal of the planning of the "Black Thirteen on his own responsibility. This, doubtless, had something to do with his bearing toward his chief.

"What is it, cap'?" he repeated. "Have matters taken a worse turn than you expected?"

"Yes, and no," replied Darkhurst, enigmatically. "What do you think of Red?" he pursued after a pause. "Can he be relied on?"

"You ask a question, cap'n, which I'm not prepared to answer," was the giant's reply. "You know as much, if not more of him, than I. If I was to go according to my impressions I would say no—emphatically no! But then, again, that wouldn't be fair to Red. A man, Captain Darkhurst, isn't to be judged by his phiz. Handsome is as handsome does, they say; and then there's Bertram—one of the sturdiest props of the band."

"Ah, to be sure, to be sure," said Darkhurst, thoughtfully. "We can rely on Bertram, for him we do know."

Even as Darkhurst spoke, Madge Wilkes' words came up to his mind:

"I didn't like that man Bertram; he has a treacherous face."

A wee grain of doubt, not to say suspicion, crept into Darkhurst's brain.

Whom could he trust?

CHAPTER XV.

WAS BERTRAM DEAD?

Rariton Darkhurst did not permit his judgment to be influenced very long by a suspicion due to a woman's mere whims.

He knew that the majority of women's likes and dislikes were not based on any logical grounds—and might not this be the case with even the brilliant Madge Wilkes?

Madge had little use for Bertram—and this the Captain decided was very natural. Women as a rule are guided more or less by sentiment, and a handsome presence proves a powerful factor in their reasoning.

Now Bertram's face wouldn't have taken a prize at any beauty show. For truth to say he was an ill-favored looking dog, at best and between Bertram and Red there wasn't very much to spare as to their relative good looks, the one being about as unhandsome as the other.

But looks, good or bad, cut no figure in Darkhurst's calculations. Man-like he was disposed to judge a person by his record—and Bertram's record, as a past master in every species of rascality, strongly recommended him as a man of the right kind.

"If they come at all they must be here shortly," said Darkhurst's lieutenant.

"True. But they ought to have been here at least twenty minutes ago. I gave them an hour. They could have accomplished their mission in less."

"Which way did they go?" asked his second in command.

"How am I to know," growled Darkhurst, fast losing his temper as he paced up and down in great impatience. "The devil take both of 'em!" he exclaimed, resentfully.

"It may be that he already has," replied his lieutenant with grim humor. "And the devil wouldn't get a prize package at that, for two uglier looking vagabonds I never came across."

"I wish I'd sent some of the other fellows," said Darkhurst, not heeding the giant's words. "It will be daylight before we get away from here."

"Well, it can't be helped. If they don't get here with the vehicle soon, we'll have to adopt some other way."

"I wish you'd tell me how!" said Darkhurst. "We seem to be in a quagmire of doubt and preplexity."

"Well, let's see how we stand," the other ventured. "Kingsley's body has to be removed from the depot. This, as I understand, is to be the first item on the program."

"I've already attended to that."

"Might I ask how did this come to pass? You usually consult me on such matters," said the giant, reproachfully.

"I couldn't consult a man not present," replied Darkhurst. "You were away when it was decided by the Council of 'Thirteen' to remove Kingsley's body from the railway station. It wasn't my doing"—apologetically. "When the question came up in meeting I strongly objected. But my objection was overruled and I had to agree to carry out the suggestion of the majority. By this time Kingsley's body is, no doubt, in the old house on the outskirts of D——, it being the nearest and safest place it could be taken to."

"That may be. But it seems that the Council oversteps its powers," grumbled the giant. "I don't see, now the man's dead, that they should have gone to so much trouble. But I suppose the Council knows what it's about! I only hope they've made no mistake in their over-quick work."

"That was exactly what I said," from Darkhurst, in a conciliatory voice.

"And now comes a more important point," the giant pursued. "Where are those two prisoners to go?"

"The cellars of Deltoid Hall will fill their bill for the present—at least for a night or two," answered Darkhurst after a pause. "Of course there will be a close hunt for them, and it won't serve our purpose to be

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carting them round the country till we can do so safely. That Porter I'm led to believe is one of the most dangerous detectives in New York—and brimful of resources. I learned that he was sent here by the Pinkerton Agency to get a line on our doings, and so procure evidence to break up the 'Black Thirteen' and land its members in jail. Since Kingsrey's removal that would not be altogether pleasant, as it would entail a capital offence for you, myself and the majority. If Porter should ever escape, the electric chair would be our portion, and there's no getting away from that, either," ended Darkhurst gloomily.

"Did you ever see this Porter to recognize him?"

"No, I can't say that I ever did. But we have him now in our clutches—and must keep him there, then later rid ourselves of him for good."

"Yes, that's all very well," commented the giant, "but wouldn't it be infernally awkward if you had the wrong man?"

"What do, you mean?" Darkhurst demanded, scowling.

"If this man shouldn't be Porter, for instance? If he should prove to be some other fellow—we'd be nicely fooled, and up against it for fair, wouldn't we?"

"But it is Porter—and nobody else."

"And you're sure you're not mistaken?"

"Positive. Lumley, when he recovered consciousness gave Porter dead away. 'Where are you, Bob Porter—Mr. Porter?' he said correcting himself. Then before he could say any more he went into a dead faint.

"I think the engineer must have had a fracture of the skull. For these were his last words before he again lapsed into insensibility."

To Bob Porter this was news he little expected. Concealed in the branches of the elm, he had heard every word of the foregoing colloquy.

Porter felt deeply concerned for the poor engineer, as but for him, Lumley would never have met with this mishap.

But the detective had other matters now to engage his thoughts.

He had made a mental note of everything he had heard.

The words "Deltoid Hall" rang continually in his ears.

"Deltoid Hall must be one of the rendezvous of the 'Black Thirteen.' "

But Porter was soon awakened to still another important fact—the rumbling of wheels of some conveyance came faintly on the still air.

The sounds grew louder—then the cracking of a whip, like a distant pistol shot, rang through the glade.

Darkhurst and his companion at once got into the shadow of the trees.

"Here they come!" exclaimed both of the robbers.

It was Red, returning alone with the covered vehicle.

He drove furiously, as though pursued.

At last Red pulled up his team, and Darkhurst and his lieutenant went out to meet him.

We need not repeat the conversation which took place on the occasion, except to say that while Red was giving his account, the exclamation "liar!" met his words several times. All this is known to the reader, so there is no need of dwelling on it.

Giving Red the lie was the work of Bob Porter, who used the exclamation with telling effect, as the reader knows.

Porter saw also the removal of the now unconscious man to the waiting vehicle, followed by the sudden appearance of Ebenezer Shiner and his armed posse of farmers.

Then came the firing of an ear-deafening fusillade of shots on both sides—the flight of the covered wagon, guarded by Darkhurst's men, and finally the disappearance of pursued and pursuers down a narrow lane leading from the main road.

Porter had barely descended from the branches of the elm tree when all were gone, which fact afforded him time to mature his plans for the ultimate capture of Rarlton Darkhurst and his band of desperadoes. Deltoid Hall was now to be the objective point of the detective's further efforts. Thither, they had no doubt, taken the corpse of the murdered millionaire—and there of course, would they also convey poor Adam Lumley and the unknown detective.

It might naturally occur to the reader that Bob Porter was somewhat remiss in his duty.

But such was not the case.

He had an object in not following in the steps of Ebenezer and his grotesquely armed posse of odd looking countrymen.

When quiet once more reigned in the timber, Porter reflected what he should next do. Being up the whole of the night before on a case of much importance, he had had no sleep, and now he badly felt the need of five or six hours rest, at least—which would improve him, both physically and mentally.

Not alone was Bob Porter drowsy, but he was also very hungry.

"Now, the question is, would it not be better for me to go back into the woods and sleep a few hours," reflected the detective. "No, I won't do that, as I might sleep too long," he decided almost immediately. "I'll stick it out—and keep on my feet as long as possible."

Now, what if Porter was to call and rouse the Mansons! this would be perhaps, going too far—taking too great a liberty with people with whom he had barely an acquaintance.

And Porter was almost positive now that he had suspected the Mansons without any tangible proof that connected them with Darkhurst and the "Black Thirteen."

He was sure indeed, that the Mansons had nothing to do with the outlaws. Adam Lumley's suspicions to the contrary.

Had they been connected with this desperate band, he reasoned, he must have seen or heard something of them while hiding in the woods.

Darkhurst made no allusion to the Mansons, even by a single hint—and he would surely have done so were they in any way connected with him.

The chirography that the engineer had decided was the work of the elder Manson, was no doubt, an entire error on Lumley's part.

"Many people write so nearly alike," thought Porter, "that it's hard to tell which is which—when the two handwritings are compared. Oh, yes, there's no doubt poor Lumley was mistaken."

At length Bob Porter, by his specious reasoning became so firmly convinced that the Mansons had no hand in the "Black Thirteen's" affairs that he decided to call on them—and if they were innocent, as he was quite sure they were, to have them cooperate in his plans.

They would prove valuable auxiliaries if Bob Porter's conclusions as to their innocence were anywhere near being right.

Then another matter came into Porter's mind, which related to Bertram. Was Bertram dead or had Red's murderous blow failed in its accomplishment—leaving the man unconscious and weak from loss of blood?

If Bertram wasn't dead, Bob Porter thought he could use the outlaw to good effect—and this would at least be a point gained!

"I will go and find out whether Bertram is alive or dead, anyhow," Porter decided.

CHAPTER XVI.

A RETURN TO LIFE.

Bob Porter started up the road to the clumps of timber into which he saw Red drag the body of Bertram.

The detective did not know the precise spot where Red had hidden his victim's body. For when the outlaw left the road with his inanimate burden, Porter, as a matter of prudence, did not follow him, but from the concealment of a tree-trunk, awaited Red's reappearance.

It took Porter some time to locate the spot chosen by the outlaw to hide Bertram's body. It was in the middle of a thick clump of bushes and some trailing undergrowth, and the entire proceeding was arranged so cunningly that weeks, even months, might have passed before the body would be found.

There being not the faintest ray of light in that spot, the detective carried the body into a small open space on which the moon flooded down.

Bertram's face presented a horrible, a ghastly sight—one side of which was covered with coagulated blood. One thing, however, Porter noticed particularly—the outlaw's body was still warm, and that rigidity which succeeds death was absent from the limbs.

A further examination disclosed the fact also that the supposed dead man's heart and pulse were beating faintly, which convinced Porter that the man was still alive. It was more than probable, however, that his skull was fractured.

A deep gash on the side of Bertram's head favored this theory.

It was well for the outlaw that Bob Porter had some knowledge of medicine and surgery—the detective having studied both in two colleges of surgeons and physicians, though he was never graduated from either, which in all probability had sent him into detective work. This suited his peculiar temperament far better than the medical profession, for which he often said he had no taste.

Nevertheless, Porter knew much more about medicine and surgery than some doctors.

Kneeling at Bertram's side, the detective set to work to bring all his knowledge and experience to bear on the unconscious man.

Porter finally removed the coagulated blood from around the ugly gash, and soon satisfied himself that Bertram's skull was intact. There was no fracture, as he had at first supposed, due, doubtless to the thickness of the wounded man's skull.

"It's lucky for him that his skull's so good and thick," said Porter. "Had it not, he'd have been a good subject for the coroner—that is, if he ever was discovered."

The next thing Porter undertook was to bring Bertram to consciousness.

This would have been no easy task if the detective hadn't the wherewith—a big flask of "Martel & Hennessy," and though rarely indulging in the spirit himself, Porter always thought it desirable to have it in his possession.

The detective bound Bertram's wounded head with the means at his disposal. Then unscrewing the top of the flask, he first moistened the lips of the unconscious man, then forcing his teeth apart, poured some of the spirit down his throat.

Soon the outlaw's pulse began to beat more strongly, slowly the color returned to his ghastly face, and his breast began to heave.

Porter watched these changes silently. At last he muttered:

"Good! In five minutes I'll have him asking where he is."

Porter, however, was a little premature.

Still he waited patiently.

Ten minutes passed.

The outlaw's breathing grew more perceptible—the color in his face healthier—the beating of his pulse stronger, even more regular.

Another few drops of the spirit were forced down Bertram's throat. Bertram gagged. This, to Porter was one of the best indications. But still the minutes sped, and the man did not regain consciousness.

The detective, however, was not chagrined or impatient. He tried a third dose of the brandy with more success; for Bertram, heaving a deep sigh, opened his eyes. Without a word he closed them again, and for several minutes it seemed as if he had lapsed into his former state.

Porter waited. All things must have an end—even Bertram's unconsciousness.

"Now for another dose," said the detective, after a reasonable time. "Under certain conditions, one must resort to heroic measures—and this is one of them."

Then Porter poured down the outlaw's gullet a treble quantity of the liquor.

Bertram began to choke, gagged and finally coughed, expelling some of the spirit which had been forced into him.

"I'm—I'm suffocating!" came at last from the man's lips, in choking gasps, as he spasmodically unclosed his eyes and tried to raise himself on his elbows.

The effort was too much—Bertram fell back with a groan.

"Come, now; that's good," said Porter, with satisfaction. "Bertram!" he shouted, commandingly. "You're in good hands; wake up!"

The wounded man once more looked up.

"Where am I?" he gasped, staring around.

"In the hands of friends."

"Who are you?"

His eyes were riveted on Porter like one just awakening from a horrible dream.

Then he again spoke:

"Where is Darkhurst?"

"Oh, Darkhurst has gone."

"Gone?"

"Yes."

It was clear that Bertram's brains were still confused, and that his memory was still groping in the dark.

"Who are you?"

"Oh, I'm your friend," the detective answered, partly averting his face.

"My friend?"

"Yes."

"And Red?"

"Gone, too."

"Red, gone?"

"To be sure he's gone. Here, take another drop of this brandy, and it will set you right. So! That's splendid! Yes, Red treated you bad—scurvily left you for dead, in fact—and I stood to you and brought you round."

"You brought me round?"

"Yes, saved your life. Now just close your eyes for a minute," said Porter soothingly, "and calm yourself."

Now, Porter's chief purpose was to make Bertram grateful for what had been done for him, and correspondingly bitter against Darkhurst, Red and the rest of the "Black Thirteen" for "deserting him."

To do this, Porter would have to resort more or less to what he had no liking for—exaggeration—fibbing, to put it mildly. But as the saying goes "all's fair in love and war," so it is dealing with thieves and assassins such as Darkhurst's band was composed of.

Bertram belonged to a desperate set, and perhaps there was not a worse man in the entire gang than the outlaw himself.

There is another old saying which may not be amiss: "Set a thief to catch a thief."

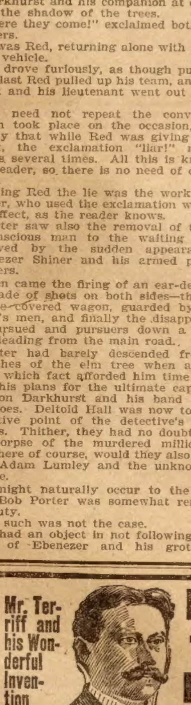
To what better use could the detective put Bertram than having him help to overhaul his unscrupulous and desperate comrades? We think we have previously said that Porter wished to make a sweeping and successful case of it, and by having Bertram's aid he would be enabled to do so without trouble, or at any rate with much less trouble than were he to act alone.

First of all, Bertram must be made to think he was badly used, and that Darkhurst and the rest had left him to his fate, through the most selfish motives.

A man, then in Bertram's state of mind,

(Continued on page fifteen.)

Mr. Terriff and his Wonderful Invention



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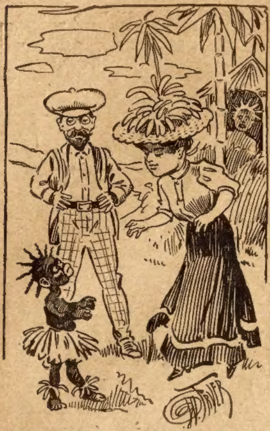


Miss Tourist—I wonder whose little tot that is?
Mr. Tourist—Oh, that's some Hottentot's tot.

Proper Name for It.

The lawyer's pretty daughter and a young man were occupying chairs on the veranda.

"It's rather cool out here," said the fair maid. "I move we conclude the session in the courtroom."

The young man having seconded the motion they at once repaired to the parlor.

Accomplished.

Percy Pink—I am weally surprised that you don't like my cousin Reggy. Why, he is so accomplished.

Miss Rose—Accomplished? In what way?

Percy Pink—Why, the dear boy can roll a cigarette with one hand. I have seen him do it myself.

Expert Opinion.

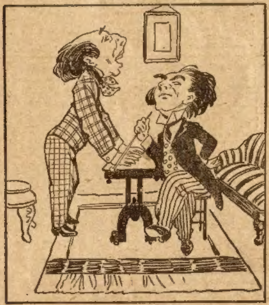
'I like to hear your wife talk," remarked the visitor. "She has such liquid tones, as it were."

"You bet she has," rejoined the husband. "Her talk simply drowns every other sound."

Fully Occupied.

Creditor—I say, old man, why don't you get out of debt?

Debtor—Haven't time. It keeps me busy getting in.



First Actor—What was the matter with Henry? He didn't appear in the second act at all.

Second Actor—Henry? Oh, yes, the fellow that takes the part of the Chinaman! Why, he forgot his cue.

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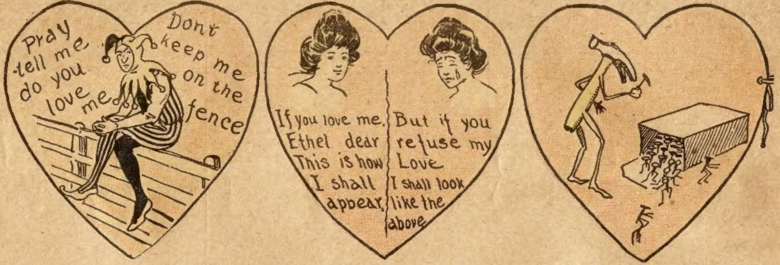
Pray tell me, do you love me
Don't keep me on the fence
If you love me, Ethel dear This is how I shall appear,
But if you refuse my Love I shall look like the above

SPECIMENS OF VALENTINES THAT COL

Wives' Names.

Hyker—I call my wife 'Frailty.'
Pyker—Why do you call her that?
Hyker—Well, you know Shakespeare says: 'Frailty, thy name is woman.'
Pyker—I call my wife Eliza Jane.
Hyker— Because why?
Pyker—Because that's her name.

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The Kansas Anti-Liquor Society is mailing free a receipt for the cure of the liquor habit. It can be given secretly in food. Also one for tobacco habit that can be given secretly. The only request they make is that you do not sell receipts, but give copies to friends. Address, with stamp, Kansas Anti-Liquor Society, 530 Gray Building, Kansas City, Mo

Favorites.

They were dining together.

"My favorite game," she says is "quail on toast."

"And mine," he rejoined, "is eagles served on twenty dollar gold pieces."

More Than Pleased.

"Weally, I detest slang," said Reggy Boreall.

"Oh, joy," laughed the pretty girl with the box of fudge.

"There it goes again. If you say 'Oh, joy' again I shall go straight home, I weally shall."

"Oh, joy! Oh, joy! Oh, joy!"

He Was Satisfied.

When he came home to dinner he brought her a box of candy as a peace offering.

"John, dear," said his wife, "I am so sorry that I lost my temper this morning."

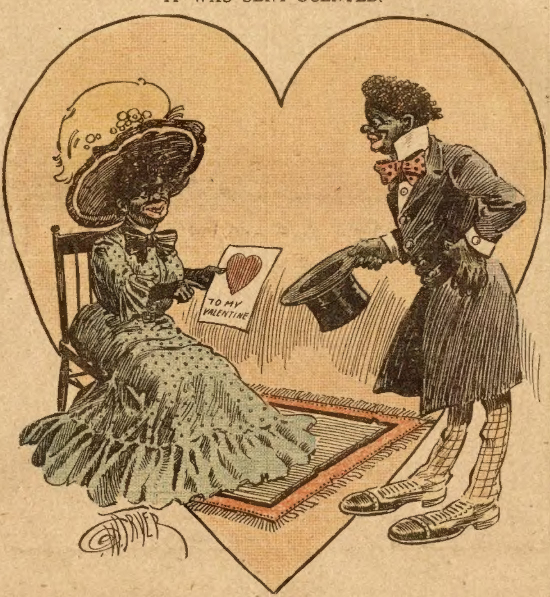
"Well, I'm not," responded her husband, "that is, provided you never find it again."

Conceited Thing.

Young Lady—Why are you always so solemn at a wedding?

Old Bachelor—It always reminds me of my many narrow escapes.

IT WAS SENT SCENTED.

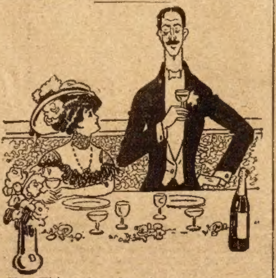


Dinah Snowhite—G'long, chile, I'se doan' b'lieve dat dis valumtine was sent by you.
Rastus Johnson—Yaas, honey, it was scented by me; doan' youah smell youah fav'rite p'fume?

Two of a Kind.

Clarence—I see by the papah that the train wreck of a few days ago was caused by a bad bwake.

Reginald—Yes, and so was the one last night. Through a bad bwake of mine at the ball I stepped on Miss Dough's twain and completely wrecked it.



She—This wine doesn't seem to go to your head as quickly as it does to mine.
He—No. That is probably because it has farther to go.

A Fair Offer.

Hotel Clerk—Very sorry, sir, but I can't let your trunk go until your bill is paid.

Stranger—You can't? Why, I'm a city official of Chicago.

Hotel Clerk—Must have the cash.

Stranger—Well, I haven't any money with me, but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a street-car franchise.

The Lesser Evil.

Mrs. Upperset—Good gracious, Marie, what is all that crying about?

Marie—The baby has the colic, ma'am.

Mrs. Upperset—What a relief! I thought at first it was poor Fido choking on a bone.

Just Like His Dad.

Willie—Pa, I don't want to go to school!

Pa—But you must have a good education, my son.

Willie—No, pa; I want to be just like you!

How It Happened.

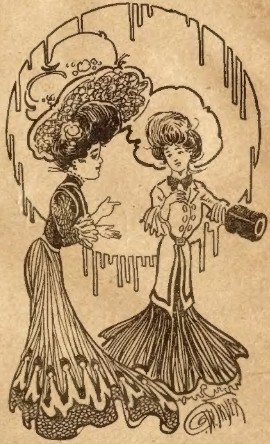
"How does it happen, Jane," snapped the angry mistress, "that I saw you feeding that policeman on pie in the kitchen last evening?"

"I furgot to plug the keyhole, mum."

Out of the City.

Bliffers—Do you live in the city?

Whiffers—No. I live on the top floor of a twelve-story flat.



Miranda—I got a lot of valentines today; all nice ones too.
Myrtilla—Really! Well, I suppose it's your own business if you want to spend your money so foolishly.

Ladies, Preserve Your Youthful Appearance.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results.

Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

No Cause for Complaint.

Irate Customer—See here, I've worn these new trousers only a week and they already bag at the knees.

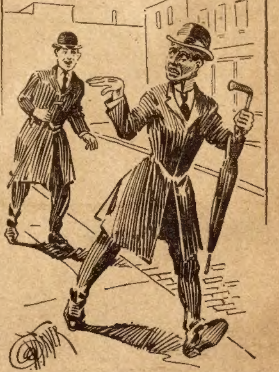
Dealer—Yah, dot vas recht. Does are our new padent pious pants vot makes beoples dink our gustomers go to church dree dimes effery day.

A Toper's Remorse.

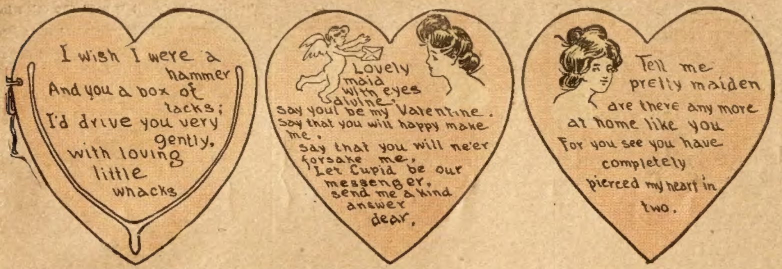
Gayboze—When my wife saw the condition I was in when I got home from the club last night it just staggered her.

Martini—I'm not surprised. You know you drank enough for two, old man!

Cautious.



Checker—Ah! Hello, old man! Where are you living now?
Sleeker—Never mind, my boy. I don't care to receive any comic valentines.


I wish I were a hammer
And you a box of tacks;
I'd drive you very gently,
with loving little whacks
Lovely maid with eyes divine.
Say youl be my Valentine.
Say that you will happy make me.
Say that you will ne'er forsake me,
Let Cupid be our messenger,
send me a kind answer dear,
Tell me pretty maiden are there any more at home like you
For you see you have completely pierced my heart in two.

LEGE GIRLS SEND TO ONE ANOTHER.

GLAD TO BE HOME

Soldier Appreciates the Right Kind of Food.

A soldier's life, especially the U. S. soldier in the tropics, is often full of hardship, as much on account of improper food as of climate or the enemy's bullets.

"I entered the service," writes an Okla. man, "for duty in the Philippines, and at time of enlistment was healthy, weighing 150 lbs.

"Food improperly prepared, along with the tropical climate soon caused my health to fail, so that when I returned to San Francisco to be mustered out, I weighed only 110 lbs. and was much reduced in strength.

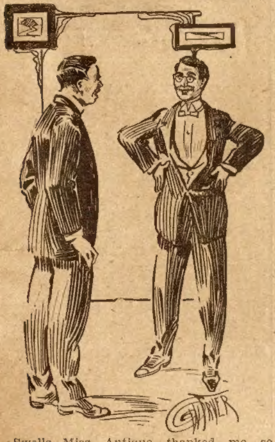
"On arrival we were issued what is called a convalescent ration, but it did not seem to build me up and after a time I concluded to try Grape-Nuts. After using it for two weeks I showed improvement and I was glad to be home where I could get the proper food.

"I have been using Grape-Nuts ever since and heartily recommend it to all soldiers returning from the Philippines, or to any person suffering from indigestion and loss of vigor.

"The U. S. Government would do well to include Grape-Nuts in their 'convalescent ration,' for soldiers who have become sick or run down from service in a tropical climate."

Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

Answered Same Purpose.



Swells—Miss Antique thanked me so much this morning for the beautiful valentine I sent her, old fellow, and I told her I was so glad she liked it.

Wells—Why, you didn't send her any valentine, did you?

Swells—(complacently)—No; but you did.

Marriage a Success.

She—My dear, I want fifty dollars to do some shopping.

He—My goodness! Why, it's only——

She—Do you remember that you came home last night in a very shaky condition?

He—Hum! Perhaps I did.

She—Yes. And I didn't say a word, did I?

He—No, my dear, not a word.

She—Well, you know silence is golden.

He—Here's the fifty dollars, my love.

The Brute.

"Such an angel of a hat," chirped the vain woman as she twirled before the mirror. "Yellow and white. What does it remind you of, my dear?"

The big man in the embroidered slippers looked up from his paper.

"Yellow and white?" he repeated. "Well, now on the level, it reminds me of a fried egg."

The Place for Them.

"If I had my way," said the pessimistic boarder, who was looking over the paper, "I would put all prize-fighters in jail."

"Don't you think," suggested the man who had an ingrown vein of humor concealed about his person, "that it would be better to send them to the pound?"

The Kind She Saw.

"Old?" echoed the lady with much hauteur. "Why, I would have you know that I have only seen eighteen springs."

"Eighteen springs!" laughed the low comedian. "Where, sister—in a parlor sofa?"

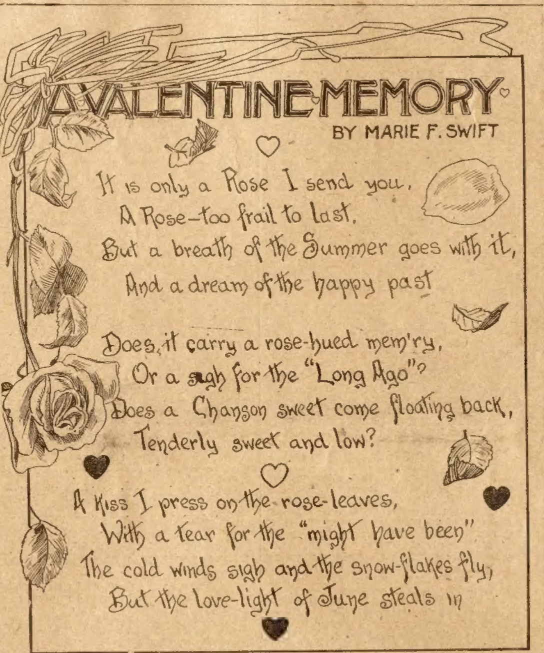
Historical Data.

Chicago Teacher—In what year did Columbus land?

Class—(No answer.)

Teacher—Come! Can't any of you tell?

Bright Boy—I don't remember th' 'xac year, mum, but it was before the fire.



A VALENTINE MEMORY

BY MARIE F. SWIFT

It is only a Rose I send you,
A Rose—too frail to last,
But a breath of the Summer goes with it,
And a dream of the happy past

Does it carry a rose-hued mem'ry,
Or a sigh for the "Long Ago"?
Does a Chanson sweet come floating back,
Tenderly sweet and low?

A kiss I press on the rose-leaves,
With a tear for the "might have been"
The cold winds sigh and the snow-flakes fly,
But the love-light of June steals in

A Pleasant Game.

"I'm so certain that I'm right," she said, "that I'll bet you a kiss."

"Against what?" he asked.

"Against another kiss, of course," she answered.

He was thoughtful for a moment.

"That settles it," he said at last. "I've found a game that permits both parties to win. Let's double the stakes."

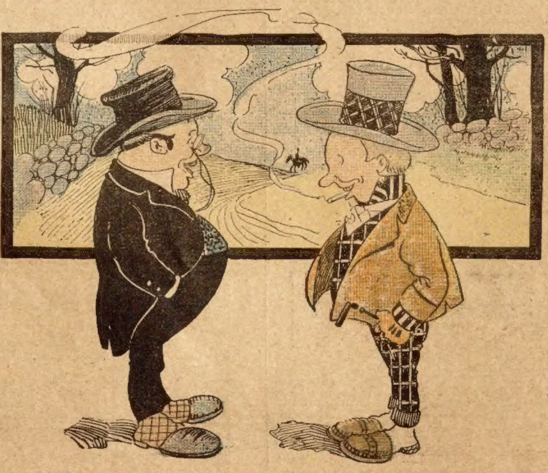
All Sunshine.

Studious Sam—Here is where some scientist states that in 2,000,000 years rain will never fall on the earth.

Jolly Jack—Gracious! I hope I live that long.

Studious Sam—Why so?

Jolly Jack—Why, when these sunny days arrive we won't have to save up for a rainy day.



Tim—Are you going to send your wife a comic valentine?
Tom—Yes; that box of cigars she gave me at Christmas.

AGENTS WANTED

Nearly all the readers of THE LEDGER will find these advertisements of interest to them. There will be found among them some excellent chances of making money by selling goods to friends, neighbors and others. Those seeking such an opportunity either as a regular or temporary occupation, should write the advertisers whose offers follow.

SWIFTLIT

WORKS LIKE CITY GAS

In Your Home or Store. *No "Bonfire" to start it.*

Lights like a flash with ¼ of a match. That's a fact which will cost you only 1 cent a day to realize if you use a "Swiftlit" Lamp. *Think of that.*

Radically different from any lamp you ever saw or heard of. *Just like City Gas* and better than a dozen kerosene lamps. Gives from 100 to 500 candle-light power—a penetrating soft light, the best to *read* or *sell* goods by, or it will *light your whole street front* if hung over outer door.

No alcohol expense or tedious waiting. Acts simply by gravity or pressure feed. *Burners* which fit old lamps supplied cheaply. Thousands of "Swiftlit" Lamps are used by the people of the U. S. We were established in 1868.

You can't afford to be without one. If you can be our Agent in your neighborhood, write for *wholesale price on specimen* "Swiftlit" Lamp. Now, don't put it off. Write *today.* Hear by return mail. *Then* order if you *want* to. You will. PLANET MFG. CO., Dept. 18, ST. LOUIS.

$21 a Week to put out Merchandise and Grocery Catalogs. Home territory. American Home Supply Co., Dept. F69, Chicago

LEARN to make Mirrors and make big money at home Partic. for stamp. MacMasters, D36, Peru, Ind

AGENTS, CREDIT, Perfumes, Flavors, etc. Big profits. Express Paid. Terms Free. HERBENE AGENCY CO., Box 282, Sta'n L, New York

WE PAY $36 A WEEK AND EXPENSES to men with rigs to introduce poultry compound. Year's contract. IMPERIAL MFG. CO., DEPT. 1 PARSONS, KANS.

LADY Canvassers for best selling article to ladies on market; $8 to $10 daily profit possible. SSUG RUBBER CO., Dept. K, Box 898, MILWAUKEE, Wis.

SELL TOBACCO and CIGARS, locally or traveling. Salary or commission. Full time or side line. Good pay; promotion; experience unnecessary. Write Morotock Tobacco Works, Box C18, Danville, Va.

WE PAY $80 A MONTH SALARY and furnish rig and all expenses to introduce poultry and stock powders in packages and bulk; new plan; steady work; reliable manufacturer. Bigler Co., X 438, Springfield, Ill.

AGENTS wanted everywhere, 30 days credit. PORTRAITS 30c, FRAMES 15c. Work guaranteed. SAMPLES AND CATALOGUE—FREE. GIBBS PORTRAIT CO., 1180-82-87 Harrison St., Chicago.

PICTURE AGENTS Large 24x28 Framed Wall Pictures cost 43c, sell 98c easy, 100 subjects. Crayon portraits 45c. FRAME FACTORY, Wayne, Ill

WANTED Lubricating oil agents, good reliable men to sell our high grade lubricating oils, greases, etc. Also Barn, Roof and House paints on commission, either side line or full time. Goods sold direct to consumer. The Reliable Oil & Paint Co., Cleveland, Ohio

GOLD RINGS FREE

Sell 10 p'ks of Smith's Hair Grower & Dandruff Remedy at 10c. each. We trust you; when sold send money and we'll send 2 rings or choice from our premium list. Agents wanted. Rosebud Perfume Co., Box 56, Woodsboro, Md

MEN WANTED in every locality in the United States to advertise our goods, tack up showcards in all conspicuous places and distribute small advertising matter. Commission or salary $83 per month and expenses $4 per day. Steady work the year round; entirely new plan; no experience required. Write for particulars. WM. R. WARNER MED. CO., London, Ont., Canada

AGENTS GET THIS $200

Taking only one order a day for our high-class, medium priced made-to-order Suits, Overcoats and Trousers, will give you a steady monthly income of $200.00 or more. No previous experience needed to succeed—our special guarantee plan gets the orders. Large Sample Outfit in Traveling Case furnished live hustlers free. Write now and get into business backed by big house. We will make you a cracker-jack, well-dressed salesman with money. WARRINGTON WORSTED & WOOLEN MILLS Dept. 80 173 Adams St., Chicago.

BE YOUR OWN BOSS!

SELL Photo Knives

Indestructible, transparent handle. Photo emblem and name underneath. Every blade forged from razor steel. Agents make from $25 to $40 per week. Exclusive territory. Big commission. Write for particulars. CANTON CUTLERY CO., 1265 W. 10th Street, Canton, Ohio

MAGIC BILL BOOK!

An entertaining and useful article. Can be used as any ordinary pocket book. Sample by mail 15c ACENTS WANTED.

W. C. WATKINS & CO, Box 1505, Pittsburg, Pa.

LOTS of MAIL

Would you like to get a lot of letters, circulars and packages? If so, read this advertisement very carefully. You probably know that manufacturers, supply houses, wholesalers and publishers buy names and addresses for the purpose of sending samples, advertising matter, papers and circulars to. Good names and addresses are hard to get and are quite expensive. We publish an Agent's Directory List containing names and addresses carefully arranged in alphabetical order. We send these Directory Lists to concerns we know are anxious for good names to send advertising matter to. The cost of arranging these names in suitable shape and taking care of them is considerable yet we only ask 10 cents in silver for our trouble. Write your name very plainly so the printer will not make a mistake; be sure to give your street number and town also plainly written so that any mail addressed to you will reach you without fail. Simply enclose 10 cents with your name and address as above stated saying you wish your name inserted in our Agent's Directory List and we will insert it in the next Directory which we are now preparing.

AGENT'S DIRECTORY LIST, INDIANA, Indiana County, PENNA.

When answering advertisements you will favor the advertiser and the publishers by mentioning The Chicago Ledger.

Her Fateful Marriage

By ANNIE BROWNLEE

[Copyright by W. D. Boyce Co.]

Begun in No. 52, Dec. 28. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN A WORLDLY MOTHER'S EYES.

It is Mrs. Langdon's day, and her rooms are comfortably filled. Lady Althea Fitz-Roberts is there. She has just returned after spending a few days with Grace at the quiet old Grange by the sea; and has taken this opportunity of seeing the mother.

"Grace mentioned in her last letter that you had been to see her," Mrs. Langdon begins. "What on earth does she do with herself in that dreary old place?" she asked impatiently. "It gives me the blues even to think of it. I have asked her repeatedly to come to town, but she never seems to notice the invitation; and her letters are so unsatisfactory," she complained.

"Grace seems in very delicate health, and I believe prefers the quiet of the Grange," Lady Althea replied.

She had not quite made up her mind whether she ought to tell her the truth, that Sir Richard had ordered Grace to remain at the Grange, with strict orders not to leave it without his permission.

"But is there not something more serious the matter? Sir Richard is always abroad now. It looks strange, to say the least. I know, if there is anything wrong you will know it, else I should not ask."

"You are right, Mrs. Langdon, there is something wrong between Grace and her husband. Your daughter is most unhappy. Her marriage was a fatal error. I think, could you look behind the scenes and into your child's broken heart, you would agree with me, that title and wealth are not everything in this life."

Mrs. Langdon's eyes gleam with angry resentment.

"If Grace is unhappy it must be her own fault. Her husband has surrounded her with everything that a woman could desire to make her happy."

"From a worldly view, perhaps. But a loveless marriage to a woman of Grace's temperament was a hazardous experiment. It was unfortunate that you objected to her marriage with Mr. Eldon."

Mrs. Langdon's eyes flashed angrily.

"I suppose she has been complaining to you. Mark was always wild and fast, and not at all an eligible suitor for my daughter. I acted for the best, and she has proved very thankless, very ungrateful."

"Your best turned out to be the very worst, Mrs. Langdon. A young, innocent girl, like Grace, should never have married such a fast, worldly man as Sir Richard. His reputation was never of the best, and he has treated Grace abominably."

"Really!" Mrs. Langdon exclaimed, with more curiosity than pity in her voice. "Has it anything to do with the Countess of Ruttlen?"

"Yes," Lady Althea answered, her face coloring with angry indignation. "Grace excused and condoned their conduct as long as possible, but, as is usual in such cases, there came a day when the limit of endurance was reached."

Then she told her what occurred in the hotel in Paris, and Sir Richard's threat.

"Good heavens!" cried the mother aghast. "What scandal—what dreadful disgrace! Grace must be a fool—a perfect fool! Why could she not have behaved sensibly, and not make such a fuss about it? Men are never true—never faithful. But to insult a woman of the Countess' standing was madness—sheer madness. I always knew that Grace was a fool—but I never thought a daughter of mine could be such a fool."

"It does seem strange, doesn't it?" asked the other dryly. "But you see, Grace is one of the few women nowadays who prefer self-respect to all else."

"Rubbish!" cried Mrs. Langdon, growing more irate each moment. "She has everything she needs to make her happy; why could she not have been content?"

"I suppose it does seem odd to you," Lady Althea says a little coldly, "But Grace and yourself are very unlike each other."

"Grace is an imbecile!" Mrs. Langdon fumed. "The idea of getting herself into a scrape like that, and all for nothing! Had she a particle of sense she would never have insulted the Countess, after getting herself talked about as she did with Mark Eldon. I think it was very good of Sir Richard to overlook that."

"You forget, Mrs. Langdon, Sir Richard had no intention of overlooking it. It served his aims better to encourage the friendship."

"Oh, I forgot. Yet, I do feel sure Grace brought it all on herself," she answered fretfully.

"I think," said Lady Althea thoughtfully, "that you do not quite understand your daughter, and you do her injustice. I suppose you will allow that a woman should know when to support her own dignity?"

"I dare say Grace made a great deal of unnecessary fuss; it would be just like her. Had she been quite blameless herself, it would not have looked so bad. I think I will just take a run down to the Grange and see if I can't patch matters up a bit," she said slowly. "It's so silly of Grace to have acted so."

"Really, I don't see how she could have acted otherwise, Mrs. Langdon. Would you have her yield to his wishes and give him his freedom, that he might marry the Countess?"

"No, certainly not," was the sharp reply. "Yet, I am convinced that she has only herself to blame. Her peculiar notions and high-flown ideas have brought this trouble upon her. I will go down at once, and let her know what I think of her conduct."

"I think," said Lady Althea very quietly, "I would not go if I were you."

"Why not?" she demanded sharply.

"Because you could do no good, and might do much harm. For the present they should be left entirely alone, and time alone will tell what the end will be. Grace is proud and high-principled, and she will brook no interference. But this I know, she will do what she believes to be right, no matter what the cost. Sir Richard has ordered her to remain at the Grange, but I imagine that is no great punishment to her. She always loved the old place, and all the memories of her child cling about it."

"It is a pity the child did not live," Mrs. Langdon exclaimed involuntarily.

"It is, indeed! Not that I imagine it would have made any difference to the father. He never cared for the child, except as the heir that would come after. But he would have been a comfort to Grace now."

"Grace must have been to blame," the mother cried fretfully. "Good heavens, everybody knows such things go on! You can't make saints out of men. There is no use trying. You have to take them as they are, and make the best of it. I have no doubt Sir Richard was no worse than other men. If she had been less cold and reserved, less peculiar, he would never have run after other women. It is all her own fault—all."

"I don't agree with you," interrupts Lady Althea. "You know as well as I do, that Sir Richard is just what he always was—a thoroughly bad, selfish man. He was never noted for his respect or chivalrous conduct toward women."

Mrs. Langdon is silent and uncomfortable. "It is too bad," she says at last. "It really is a great pity, and you think nothing can be done?"

"One can only wait and hope," answers Lady Althea sadly.

Meanwhile, Sir Richard is beginning to find out that the way of the transgressor is hard. Mrs. Duncan's righteous indignation knows no bounds. She loses no opportunity, or misses no chance to make him feel the weight of her scorn and contempt. She is too loyal to Grace to betray the confidence placed in her. Yet, somehow the impression has got abroad that he has banished his wife from society, that he may the more unrestrainedly enjoy the friendship of the Countess.

So great has become the whispered comments, that society has begun to avoid him. Even the men, some of whom are none too virtuous themselves, consider he has quite overstepped the bound of respectability.

The Countess long ago decided that hotel life was not congenial to her, and engaged a pretty suite of rooms in a fashionable quarter. She is furious at Sir Richard for the scandal that has arisen. In her rage and selfishness she deems herself quite blameless—in fact, quite a martyr—and holds her partner in shame alone responsible for her humiliation.

It is a new experience for the dashing, vivacious Countess to meet only cold looks and avoidance, where she was once so much sought after and admired. Society has been shocked and outraged by her cold-blooded separation of husband and wife, and an ill odor clings to her name.

The Countess has gently, but firmly, given Sir Richard to understand that he is not to come near her again, and on no account is he to visit her rooms. She must try and retrieve her ruined reputation by complete avoidance of him.

Against this decision he persuades, argues, entreats, and finally threatens, but to no avail. The Countess will not budge from her decision, and the result is, they part in anger.

To add to his rage and mortification he sees that the Count accompanies her everywhere, and rumor says she has accepted him.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN WOMAN BECOMES A DEVIL.

The weeks wear into months, yet the Countess will not relent, and Count Hasselgrave accompanies her more and more frequently. At last, in a fit of desperation and despair, Sir Richard seeks her in her rooms. He is most unwilling to break with her entirely, because she happens to be the only woman of whom he has never tired, the only woman who can charm and amuse him at all times.

At last, with a determination worthy of a better cause, he decided to put his fate to the test, determined to know whether the rumor of her approaching marriage is really true. He calls at an early hour, that he may find her alone; and is shown into a dainty little parlor.

A few minutes later the Countess enters. He had sent up no card, and she has no idea who her visitor may be. When she sees Sir Richard her dark eyes flash angrily.

"So you have come, then, despite my orders that you should not?" she says coldly.

"Yes, I have come. Forgive me, Kitty, if I have done wrong, but I could not stay away. I heard you were going to marry the Count, and I came to ask you if it is so?"

"Well, supposing it is so?" she cried indignantly.

"You admit it is true, then?" he asked darkly.

"I admit or deny nothing. But as far as you and I are concerned we must henceforth be strangers."

"Have a care, Kitty! We have been too much to each other in the past to ever be that. I have sacrificed too much for your sake to meekly submit to be thrown aside like a broken toy, and see another in the place where I should be."

"You threaten me?" she asked, mockingly. "You forget that your wife is still your wife, despite your efforts to have it otherwise. You talk insanely, sir. You, a married man, speaking as though you were eligible for matrimony," she sneered.

"My wife was still my wife months ago, and you were aware of the fact; yet you encouraged me by every art known to your sex. I warn you again, you shall never be the wife of Count Hasselgrave. I would prevent it, were you at the very altar," he cried, with rising indignation.

"Don't excite yourself unnecessarily," the Countess replied, with provoking coolness. "I shall act as I deem best for myself. I have my future life to think of, and you know you very nearly ruined my character. My one desire now is to regain my good name and social position. So you will excuse me if I ask you to make your call as brief as possible."

"My God, woman! Why did you not think of all that months ago? It is too late now. You led me on and encouraged me by every device your charming brain could conceive, and now you shall not throw me over. I cannot, and will not, give you up. So beware!"

Her dark, brilliant face paled a shade or two, but she answered lightly enough:

"You are a fool, Dick! You have a wife already. Do you suppose I am going to waste my while life waiting for the freedom that may never be yours? If you do, you are a greater fool than I took you for. It was most unfortunate that you called this morning," she said coldly. "You will oblige me in the future by not doing so again."

As she ceased speaking, she moved toward the door, as though to leave the room. He sprang toward her and grasped her arm.

"Good heavens! You don't, you can't mean it?" he cried incredulously.

"You will find that I do mean it," she retorted sharply.

"My God!" he cried wildly, "was it for this I ruined my home and broke my wife's heart?"

His voice was full of such pathos and despair as is seldom wrung from a human heart. In that moment he tasted of the cup from which Grace and Mark Eldon had drank to the very dregs. Perhaps the bitterness of his draught was even greater than theirs; for there was always an accusing conscience to whisper in his ear.

"You, also, should have thought of all that, months ago!" she said tauntingly.

For a moment he looks at her with teeth clenched and face twitching.

"I could find it in my heart to slay you," he hissed. "But remember, if ever you wed the Count, or any other man, I shall take your worthless life, if I have to follow you to the end of the earth to do it!"

Picking up his hat, he dashed madly out, and ran into the tall, lank form of Count Hasselgrave, sending that nobleman's hat flying in one direction, and its owner in another. He did not pause to note the extent of the injury done, but kept on down the street as though pursued by a thousand fiends.

The Count, limp and bruised, rolled himself onto the Countess' steps to regain his lost breath. His dark, swarthy face was almost purple with indignation, and his dearest wish just then was for a speedy revenge.

Meanwhile, the Countess sat in her elegant little parlor. Her dark, handsome face wore a perplexed and anxious look, and for the first time in her life she was afraid of a man's threat. There was something in and about Sir Richard that warned her he was in terrible earnest. Therefore, she set her scheming brain to work to devise some plan by which she could effectually rid herself of Sir Richard, before carrying out her contemplated marriage with the Hungarian. While puzzling her brain to devise ways and means, the Count was announced.

Like a flash the thought crossed her mind, "Why not use the Count to rid her of her old lover?" She knows the Hungarian is as famous for his duels as he is noted for his card playing.

The Count angrily recounts his adventure

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in every town to take orders for custom made suits. Big commissions paid and large sample outfit furnished free to those who can do business. You can make big money working for us. No trouble to get orders. We give free with each full suit order an extra pair of pants, fancy vest and prepay express charges. **Don't Delay; write at once for sample outfit. Address**

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100 Post Cards Free Fine assortment. Make big money selling them. Send 10c for postage, etc., on big lot, and our great offer & catalog (2 lots 25c) B. BANNER CO., 1071 N. Fairfield Av., Chicago

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at her door, and vows vengeance on the reckless Englishman.

"But pardon me, Countess, why was he so heedless, so agitated? Surely you had not quarreled?"

"Yes, we did quarred. He—he is a wretch, a coward! He insulted me dreadfully. Had—had I a husband or a brother he would not go unpunished. But I am quite alone and he knows it, and he dares to insult a friendless woman!"

The Countess had succeeded in working herself into an agitated, tearful state that was pitiable to witness.

"Calm yourself, Countess. The insult shall be avenged. Sir Richard Neville will this day answer to me for his baseness!" the Count cried in great anger.

She turns aside as though to hide the tears, but in reality to hide a smile of triumph, that her plan has succeeded so well.

"You are too kind, Count, too considerate. I cannot think of involving you in such a thing. Let it pass," she says, with a sigh that may mean so much.

"Pass over an insult to a lady? Never! In Hungary, blood alone can atone for such a thing. But I have a favor to crave. Give me the right to protect you now and always, and never again shall man dare to insult you thus."

For a moment the Countess hesitates—for appearance sake only—then says:

"Punish Sir Richard for this cruel insult and you shall have your reward."

With a smile so eloquent, so intoxicating, as to almost turn the man's brain, she held out her hand and grasped that of the man she had bidden to spill another's blood for her sake.

He draws her to his heart with a fierce, passionate tenderness, and she unresistingly allows him to kiss her again and again.

"My dear, I promise you the fullest and most perfect revenge," he murmured fondly. "Sir Richard Neville has only a few short hours to live," and she smiles her answer up at the dark, evil face of her—tool.

It is growing late in the afternoon when the Hungarian quits the Countess' rooms. He goes straight to his own apartments, and dispatches a messenger with a challenge to Sir Richard at his hotel. When the latter receives it, he is at first amazed, then a sudden fury seizes him. He recognizes the hand of the Countess in this, and in his mad rage he accepts the challenge without a moment's hesitation, and assures the Count's messenger that he shall have the desired satisfaction.

When the Hungarian leaves the Countess there is the light of triumph in her eyes, and in her heart not one single thought of pity for the man whom she has lured to ruin, and perhaps to death. She has never known remorse in all her life, and in her ears the "still small voice" of conscience has long since ceased to whisper.

CHAPTER XXI.

ALONE WITH DEATH.

Mark Eldon and the Duncans have been wandering about Europe for the last two or three months, and have just returned to Paris. The Duncans intend spending a week in the gay French capital before returning to England. Mark's plans are indefinite, but he has seriously thought of returning to America.

On the way to their hotel their attention is arrested by a newsboy calling out his wares. People are standing here and there in excited little groups. Evidently something unusual has occurred. Just then a ragged little urchin comes running toward them, waving a paper in his hand and crying:

"All about the duel! Sir Richard Neville dying! Count Hasselgrave and the Countess of Ruttlen have fled!"

They look in each other's white, startled faces for a moment.

"My God! Sir Richard dying!" Mrs. Duncan cries, horrified. "Get a paper, Mark."

He signs to the driver to stop, snatches a paper from the urchin and throws him a half-crown, and they rattle on again. In big headlines they read:

"Sir Richard Neville fatally injured in a duel with Count Hasselgrave.. Was taken to St. Mary's Hospital. Little hopes entertained for his recovery. The Countess of Ruttlen and Hasselgrave have fled."

Mark read no more, but with a white, startled face, hands the paper to Mrs. Duncan and her husband.

"So she has tired of him, then! I half expected she would," Mrs. Duncan exclaims.

"Horrible!" Mark says with a shudder. "To think it should end like that."

"My dear Mark, you could hardly expect it to end otherwise. And I can't say that I find it in my heart to pity him so very much. He treated Grace shamefully, disgracefully, and all for the sake of that horrible woman."

"I wonder if Grace is with him?" Mark asks slowly.

"I think not. The duel only occurred this morning, it seems. Supposing she had been notified, which is doubtful, she could not have arrived yet."

Mr. Duncan had been eagerly scanning the paper while the others were conversing.

"The best thing we can do, Catherine, will be to drive straight to the hospital and see him, if possible. There is no mention in the papers of Grace having been notified. He may not be in a condition to give them particulars. I have a conviction that our services will be needed."

"As you wish, dear. I have no love for the man, yet, for Grace's sake I would render any assistance possible. It might be as well for us to call and see."

Twenty minutes' drive brought them to the hospital. The attendant assured them Sir Richard was very low, but he thought perhaps, they might be able to see him. They were shown into a reception room, while the attendant went to inquire if they might see the patient.

A few minutes later a white-capped nurse conducted them into a spacious ward, where, on a spotless cot, lay Sir Richard.

Mark Eldon declined to accompany them into the ward. He feared his presence might excite, or be distasteful to the patient.

It was a very white, drawn face that was turned toward them, and the hand so feebly extended was cold and chill.

Mrs. Duncan had meant to be very cold and distant toward him, but at sight of his pale, pinched face and terrible suffering, her coldness and reserve melted away, and she could think only of his terrible agony.

"It is very good—of you to come," he said brokenly. "I don't deserve such consideration."

"We have only just arrived, and—and hearing of your condition came straight here. Is there anything we could do for you—any message we could send?" she asked anxiously.

"I—I think not," he answers weakly. "My hours are numbered. It will soon be over."

"Does Grace know?" Mrs. Duncan asks gently.

"Grace! My God, I could not ask Grace to come to me now! She couldn't do it, you know," he cried, with all the strength he could command.

"Nevertheless, she would do it, and I am going to ask her to come to you at once."

"You think she might?" he asked eagerly. "But no, an angel could scarcely do that after the way I have treated her."

"Believe me, Sir Richard, Grace will come. I know her better than you do," she assured him.

"If I thought she would," he said, scarcely above a whisper, "I would fight death off till I could look upon her face again."

"Rest assured that she will come. I promise you that," she said, with conviction.

She never forgot the look of relief and gladness that came into his tired eyes.

"I will believe it," he said feebly, "and I will not die till I see her again."

Mr. Duncan and Mark Eldon drove to the nearest telegraph office and dispatched a message to Grace.

Mrs. Duncan sits by the bedside while they are gone. Sir Richard has sunk into a troubled sleep, in which he moans restlessly, and in which Grace and the Countess seem to be mixed up.

After a little his eyes open again, and he looks at her entreatingly.

"You will not leave me till she comes?" he pleads. "I can feel the cold waters of the river of death flowing under my feet. It is rising higher and higher. It is a comfort, you know, to have a good woman by one's side at a time like this. I can feel that, at last."

"I will not leave you," she answered with tear-dimmed eyes, "and Grace will soon be here."

"You are so kind—so good, I don't deserve it," he faltered.

Then for a few moments his eyes are closed, and she thinks he is sleeping again, but he is not.

"Do you think Grace will ever forgive me?" he asks faintly. "I have been such a brute. I have neglected her, outraged all her finer feelings. I have forfeited all claim to her consideration or respect. Do you think human nature can forgive such a wrong?"

"Yes. I believe Grace can," she answers. "Grace is not of the common sort; she can rise to a height that we poor mortals could not."

"And I have been so blind," he said bitterly. "I chose the gilding and tinsel, instead of the pure gold. I did not value a good, pure, unselfish woman, until that she-devil, that imp of hell, made me think of the difference. Then it was too late to reform, or atone."

The hours of the night dragged wearily by, and another dav dawns. It is apparent to all that Sir Richard cannot live many hours longer. He battles desperately with the numbness that is creeping over him.

"I will not die! I cannot die till I see Grace again!" he cries again and again. "I must see her and hear her say she forgives me."

"Grace will soon be here now," Mrs. Duncan assures him. "I know she will lose no time, but she cannot possibly arrive before morning."

"I pray God that she may come in time," is the prayer constantly on his lips. "Oh, Mrs. Duncan, you don't know what a wretch I have been. But at a time like this, when we draw near to death, we see things as they really are, naked and undisguised. Had I my life to live over again, how different it would be!"

"None of us are as good as we might be, Sir Richard," his companion said gently. "I dare say, could we live our lives over again, in the light of past experiences, we would all steer clear of the rocks and shoals that have proven so disastrous to us. But that cannot be; God wills it otherwise."

A door in a distant part opens and shuts softly. There is a faint, almost inaudible sound of voices. Then Sir Richard turns his dying eyes toward Mrs. Duncan, and in their depths is the brightness of hope.

"That is Grace!" he whispers hoarsely. "Thank God, she has come in time. Do you know, Mrs. Duncan, that is the first time in my life I have ever thanked God for anything!"

Footsteps were coming along the corridor, and Mrs. Duncan went out to meet Grace.

"I am not too late?" she asked anxiously.

"No, dear; but the end is very near. He has been asking for you constantly. Go to him at once, dear."

Mrs. Duncan, her husband, and Mark Eldon, withdrew to a little waiting room, that the meeting between husband and wife might be alone.

A half-hour passes in silence, then the door opens, and Grace beckons Mrs. Duncan to her side.

"He wants to see Mark," she says tearfully. "Will you ask him to come?"

Mark goes at once and kneels by the dying man's couch.

"What is it, Sir Richard? Is there anything I can do for you?" he asks gently.

"Yes, there is something you can do for me," he answers weakly. "I am going to give into your keeping the greatest treasure the world can hold—that of a pure and noble woman. I want you to promise me that you will take care of Grace? Hush! Don't speak! I have no strength to waste," he cried impatiently. "I want you to pro-

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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CHAPTER VIII.
MORTIMER KING'S SCHEME.

"You say my uncle had wronged his partner in some way and had wished to make restitution?" asked Mortimer King. "In what way?"

"He collected some fifty thousand dollars due the firm for the sale of real estate," replied Fenn, "and disappeared with the money. By the transaction Tipton lost half that sum, and it ruined him."

"I was not aware that my uncle ever did anything of the kind," said King. "There must be some mistake."

"I think not. It is hardly possible, since Dennis Black confesses to it in his letter and also in his will."

"But why the thunder should he wish to give Tipton forty thousand when he, as you say, only took twenty-five thousand of his partner's money?"

"It happened some years ago, and the extra fifteen thousand dollars is doubtless included as interest, and probably to ease his conscience."

"It is a very large sum," complained Mortimer King, "but I suppose there would be little chance of avoiding its payment?"

"That would be quite out of the question," said Fenn, with a visible frown.

"I suppose so. Well, if this youth turns up and the Indians don't get his scalp while crossing the plains, I dare say he will get the forty thousand."

"Certainly. In the meantime, we shall try to get in communication with young Tipton and advise him of his good fortune. Should you be in need of any funds, you need only apply to Messrs. Hamilton & Gore, as they are instructed by the late Mr. Black's attorneys, at San Francisco, to furnish you with what you may need."

"Thanks— a thousand thanks," cried King. "I must confess that it would be very acceptable."

A half hour later Mr. Fenn took his leave. When the visitor was gone, Mortimer King rose and paced the floor with a nervous tread, his eyes shining with an eager, exultant light.

"What a magnificent windfall!" he cried. "By George! this is great luck. How lucky I am to have been a nephew of my uncle Dennis Black, and still luckier that he had no family. Twenty thousand dollars of it is mine, not counting the premium on the bonds which ought to be considerable in itself, and will bring the whole estate up to probably seventy-five thousand dollars. But forty thousand must go to that boy! Great Caesar! what can a strip of a boy from the country want with all that money, and what the Sam Hill would he do with it if he had it?"

A cloud came over his face and he continued to pace the room with nervous energy.

Presently he seized his hat and hurried from the office. Reaching the street, he turned down Main street and walked rapidly in the direction of the levee.

Arriving in front of a two-story building of dirty red bricks, he entered a doorway and ascended a flight of stairs. Passing through a dingy hall, he entered a long room with low ceiling. A motley crowd was collected in the room, gathered here and there in little groups about a number of gambling tables.

He strolled leisurely through the crowd, letting his eyes wander from face to face. Presently he came to abrupt halt. His gaze was fixed on a man who sat at a faro table. The man at the table was Newton Porter, the gambler and crook. The many stacks of chips in front of him indicated that he was winning heavily.

He was the center of interest, and an eager crowd hung over the table. It was evident that the sport had broken the bank, for the dealer stopped dealing and proclaimed that the game was closed, inviting all players to cash in their chips.

Newton Porter leaned back in his chair while the dealer began taking in his chips and counting them by sizing them up in the rack.

When they were all taken in the dealer turned his eyes on Porter.

"Seven hundred and fifty-four," he said.

Porter nodded, and the dealer opened a drawer and counted out the required sum.

"You are lucky," he said, as he pushed the pile of bills to the winner.

"It is the first streak of luck I have had in an age," replied Porter.

He took a twenty from the roll and dropped it on the table.

"You can let the boys work through that," he said. "I understand that Sam Barrington has an extra good supply of old Bourbon."

As he was leaving the gambling hall a hand was laid on his shoulder and he turned to meet the eyes of Mortimer King.

"I want to see you, Newton," he said.

"All right," replied the sport. "Glad you happened along. I have got the lucre now to settle with you."

"Oh, never mind that," said Mortimer. "Come with me to my office. I think I have bigger game for you than any you are likely to find in Kansas City."

It was quite dark when the pair reached the street. They turned into a saloon, where drinks were ordered, Porter taking whisky and Mortimer brandy and soda. Then they left the saloon and walked rapidly up the street.

On arriving at Mortimer's office the lawyer closed and locked the door. Then he pushed a chair for the accommodation of his visitor and seated himself.

"I don't like to be interrupted when I have important business on hand," said Mortimer. "A short time ago, you told me that if you could be of any service to me that all I need to do was to call on you."

"That is right," nodded Porter. "I am not in the habit of breaking my promise. I am ready. But first, let me pay you your fee. It has nothing to do with my obligation to you."

Mortimer King made a protesting gesture.

"Keep your money in your pocket," he said. "You may need it in the business I have for you."

The gambler smiled.

"You are the first lawyer I ever knew to refuse a fee," he said.

"It is because I have something bigger in sight," replied the lawyer. "But now let us come to business."

CHAPTER IX.
A DARK PLOT.

Newton Porter leaned back in his chair and waited for the lawyer to go on.

"How would you like to undertake a job that might take you to the Pacific slope?" asked Mortimer, abruptly.

"I should not mind that," replied the gambler, "so long as it was worth while. In fact, I have decided to go West anyway, and if I can kill two birds with one stone all the better."

"Of course I am not sure that you would care to engage in this job," said Mortimer, cautiously. "But I will explain and you can decide afterwards. To begin at the beginning, I have just received a visit from a messenger of Hamilton & Gore of St. Louis, who informed me that an uncle of mine living in San Francisco died recently leaving a fortune of some sixty or seventy thousand dollars, the most of it in Government bonds."

Porter gave vent to a low whistle.

"Are you in on it," he asked.

"I am his only living relative," replied Mortimer.

"Is it possible?"

"Sure, and by his will he left his entire estate to me."

"Great Jupiter! What luck!"

"But that is not all. There is a provision in the will that bids fair to deprive me of forty thousand dollars."

"The devil!"

"The will provides that forty thousand dollars shall be paid to Robert Tipton, a former partner of my uncle's or his heirs."

"And you cannot break that part of the will?"

"I'm afraid not. If Tipton should be dead and have no heir, the will provides, then the whole of the estate should go to me."

"I see! But this man Tipton, I suppose is very much alive?"

"No, he is dead."

"By George, that is lucky for you!"

"It would be if he had not left an heir."

"So that is a horse of a different color. Did he leave a family?"

"Only a strip of a boy."

"Does the boy know of his good fortune?"

"Not yet."

"Where is he?"

"On his way across the plains to California, as far as can be learned."

And Mortimer related what had been told him by Fenn regarding the boy and the adopted father who accompanied him to the West.

"The boy and Caleb Wilson left some weeks ago for Council Grove," went on Mortimer. "There, it seems, they were to wait till they could fall in with a train before attempting to cross the plains. It is possible that they may not have left Council Grove yet, but it is barely probable."

"And you wish to send some one to look after the boy?" asked Porter, a curious smile hovering about his lips.

"Something like that," replied Mortimer. "What I wish to do is to keep track of him. Should anything happen to him, you understand, the whole forty thousand would come to me."

"I see."

"The perils of the plains are many, and there are various ways in which a youth might meet with an accident that would put him out of the way."

"Just so."

"And in that case, it would be to my advantage to have some one present who could bring proof of the fact."

Porter nodded.

"If such a person could be found, who would make the trip across the plains, and would bring me such proofs, the information would be worth ten thousand dollars to me."

A vivid light burned in the gambler's eyes.

"Ten thousand, did you say?" he asked.

"Ten thousand. The money will be paid promptly."

Newton Porter passed his hand over his brow and reflected.

"You would not have me commit murder?" he said suddenly.

Mortimer started and turned pale at the words.

"Why, I have said nothing to indicate such a thing," he said. "I merely wished to impress on you the value of having some one at hand who could bring me proofs of the boy's death in case anything should happen to him that should prove fatal."

"Oh, I understand," nodded Porter. "By heavens, ten thousand is a neat little sum."

"It is so," said Mortimer. "It is worth trying for. If you want to go into the enterprise you have but to say the word. I will advance you any additional funds you may need, as soon as I can hear from Hamilton & Gore."

"I think I understand."

"You must remember that there are many chances for a youth to meet with a fatal accident while crossing the plains. There are the Indians, who often attack trains and butcher the men, women and children. Then there are various other accidents common to such a life."

"You are right. I knew a youth who went with a train for Santa Fe as a driver and the third day out he fell from the tongue of the wagon where he was riding and the big wagon ran over him, killing him instantly."

"And I heard of many being killed by being fired upon by the savages who crawled near the campfire under cover of darkness. Oh, there are many chances that a boy will never reach his destination alive when he starts to cross the plains."

"When should I start?"

"Without delay. You can go by stage to Council Grove, and once there, you will have to trust to luck."

"Do you suppose I shall find the boy there?"

"I hope so, but that is hardly probable. If he has gone on you can follow with the next train."

"Very well. I shall start by the morning stage."

"That is good. I wish you luck."

"I shall do my part, and if fortune fails to smile on me it will not be my fault."

"I can easily believe you. I shall be glad to pay you the ten thousand for looking after the boy's welfare. Don't forget that."

"I shan't."

"You will report to me as often as you can."

"Yes, you can depend on that."

"I will be at the postoffice when the stage leaves to see you."

"All right. I shall write you from Council Grove."

"I hope you will have something of importance to tell."

"It will not be my fault if I have not."

Porter rose to go.

"There is no other instructions?"

"None. You must be your own judge of what is best. Frank Tipton is a bright youth, as far as I can ascertain, and you will bear this in mind. He may not be so easy to handle as one might think."

"I shall, of course, not allow a boy to beat me at any game I set in. Good night. I'll see you in the morning."

He opened the door and went out.

A fierce light gleamed in the eyes of Mortimer King as the gambler disappeared.

"Porter is the very man for the business," he breathed, pacing up and down the room with nervous energy. "He will not fail to win the ten thousand. Frank Tipton will never reach the Pacific slope alive!"

CHAPTER X.
THE OLD PLAINSMAN'S STORY.

We will now return to Frank Tipton and Ralph Rushton whom, as it will be remembered, we left conversing with the mysterious old plainsman who had made his appearance in the little valley.

When supper was over and the things cleared away, Hicks lighted his pipe and said:

"Now, youngsters, if you want to take a

look at the interior of my castle just follow me."

He led the way, following a dim path that led down the stream. After traveling some two hundred yards he stopped at the foot of a low, thick-bodied sycamore.

The tree forked some four feet from the ground, one huge limb extending far to the west, while the other reached in the other direction.

Hicks paused at the foot of the tree, and turning to the boys with a grin on his face, said:

"Here's my castle, youngsters."

They gazed at him in bewilderment. At first they surmised that he might be joking, but it was evident that such was not the case. Could it be that he lived in the hollow of the tree? the boys asked themselves. But while they stood in mystified wonderment the old man stepped to the root of the tree and began to draw himself up.

"Come on, boys," was his invitation. "This stairway ain't the best, but it beats nothing."

As he spoke he swung himself lightly into the fork of the tree and walked nimbly along the great leaning prong of the tree that hung over a dense thicket of plum bushes that grew along the face of the cliff.

A dozen paces he walked along the limb, and then pausing, he seated himself in a large fork and flung a glance back at the two boys who still stood immovable, watching him with silent amazement.

"Say, Frank, he's crazy, sure as shooting!" whispered Ralph.

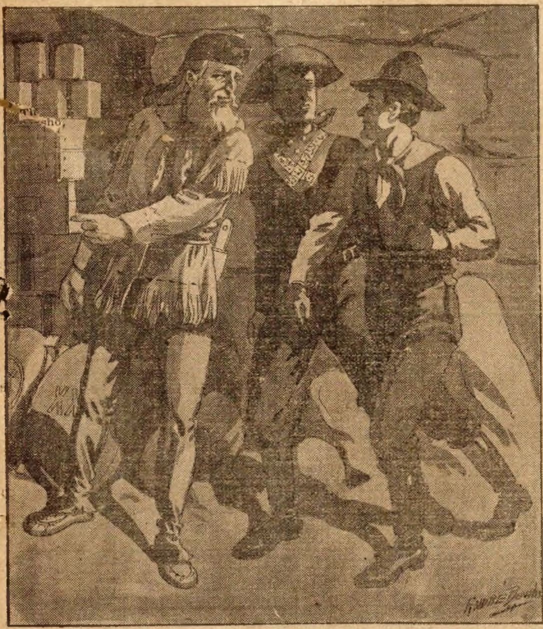
"I'm afraid so," breathed Frank.

As they spoke their eyes were for a moment removed from the old plainsman, and when they again turned their gaze in his direction he had vanished.

They stood staring at the place where he had sat but a moment before as if stupefied.

"Gee whiz!" ejaculated Frank. "What has become of him?"

"I don't know," replied Ralph.



"This is where I keep my provisions."

A low laugh came from the thicket, and the voice of Hicks broke the silence.

"Why the Sam Hill don't you come on?" he called from the dense cover. "Come right out on the limb as you saw me come and the rest is as easy as falling off a log."

"All right," replied Frank. "We'll be there in a moment. Come on, Ralph," he urged, and sprang into the tree.

Ralph followed, and as they climbed out on the large limb they could see Hicks standing in a little nook amid the plum bushes.

"Swing yourselves down," he commanded, "and then we'll go in and look at my quarters."

They obeyed, and dropping some eight or [illegible]he soft earth, they found [illegible] in a little open space [illegible] the cliff that skirted the [illegible]

[illegible]id Hicks, and parting [illegible]that grew against the [illegible]trance to what ap[illegible] revealed.

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[illegible]e sand, and on [illegible]l as noiselessly [illegible]g on the richest [illegible]

[illegible]nber was a bed [illegible]ed with a buffalo [illegible]psite wall was a [illegible] tin plates, cups [illegible] bottles. To the [illegible], and on either [illegible]king utensils.

A pine table and a few stools completed the furniture.

"You see, I am very snugly situated here," remarked Hicks, as he seated himself on one of the stools and pushed two others for the accommodation of his visitors. "You may have thought it rather queer that I should take the trouble to climb a tree in order to enter my retreat, but if you will only reflect a moment you will see my reasons for it.

"In a place like this one is never certain when some hostile Comanche may drop in, and it is well to provide against such visits when it is possible. Should I have entered this place by making a path along the cliff to the opening, it would have been to invite intrusion from any one who might happen this way. By arriving at the entrance by way of the tree, I leave no trail behind and so my place of abode is securely hidden from any one who may pass this way. What do you think of my plan?"

"It is excellent!" cried Frank. "Why, one might live here for an age and no one be the wiser."

"If I had to live in this country alone as you do," said Ralph to the old plainsman, "I am quite sure I'd like such a place as this, and I would always enter by the tree route."

"It is the safest way," nodded the old man. He got up and taking the torch, conducted the boys to a small opening in the wall of the cavern. It was about three feet high and two in width, so they had to stoop very low in order to enter.

Threading their way through the passage for a dozen feet they came into another chamber quite as large as the first. Here they came to a halt, while Hicks held the light aloft so that they might have a good view of the surroundings. Much to the surprise of the visitors, they saw a pile of boxes and a number of bags stacked against the wall. The place was evidently a storehouse.

In response to the looks of surprise on the faces of the boys the old plainsman said:

"This is where I keep my provisions. I have got enough flour, bacon and coffee there to last me more than a year, to say nothing of the barrel of sugar and a lot of dried fruit.

"How did it happen that I have all this supply? Well, I'll come to that by and by. To the left there you will notice an opening which extends downward at a sharp angle. At the bottom of that, some twenty yards below, is a small stream of cold water. So you see that I am prepared to stand a good long siege in case I should be penned up in here by the redskins."

After showing his visitors his stores, he conducted them back to the chamber they had just quitted.

"I have been here for nearly a year," said Hicks, "which may seem strange to you. But it has not been altogether from choice that I have remained so long.

"Last September I left Council Grove in company with several emigrants bound for California. It was my intention to go as far as Colorado and there stop at the gold mines that have been discovered in the vicinity of Pike's Peak.

"I was alone, and having no load, I hit upon the idea of filling my wagon with provisions, such as would find a ready sale in the mines at high prices. This I did, and we left Council Grove in the best of spirits.

"It was rather late to start across the plains, but we hoped to get through without any trouble, though the heat of the summer had left little grass for our stock and teams, and it was reported that the Comanches were again on the warpath.

"As we neared this place one of my horses fell lame, and it was impossible for me to keep up with the train of ten wagons I had fallen in with. They did what they could to assist me, but I soon saw that I must stop till my horse recovered from his lameness or give up the trip.

"It was unreasonable to expect that the others would wait on me, and of course I did not expect it. I decided to stop, and if I could strike no other train by the time my horse recovered, I would return to Council Grove.

"That train of ten wagons moved on. I stood watching them as they strung along the winding trail, and now and then some member of the party would wave a hat or handkerchief to me, and I would respond by waving my hat in return.

"And so I watched them go over the swell—little dreaming that they were going to their death—a dreadful death at the hands of the blood-thirsty Comanches."

CHAPTER XI.

A SHOCKING TRAGEDY.

"Yes," went on the old plainsman, "every living soul with that train went to his death. It was fearful. I saw it with my own eyes, and was powerless to give them aid.

"It was but a little after noon when I stopped and the train moved on without me. As I have said I watched them till they disappeared over the swell in the prairie, and then I went back to where my horses were picketed and began to use some liniment on the one that was lame.

"I hoped that by morning I might be able, by a liberal use of the liniment, to have my horse in shape to resume my journey and overtake the train during the next day. They had promised to move slowly for the first day or two and keep a watch behind for me. It was near sunset when I ascended a little hill in the plain with my fieldglass to see if I could get sight of the train. As I turned the glass along the trail to the west I saw a sight that made my blood run cold—a sight that I shall never forget till my dying day.

"The train was fully ten miles away, and as I focused the glass on it it appeared to be less than a half mile distant. As I looked I saw that every one was in a breathless hurry. The drivers were urging their teams into a circle so as to form a corral, and less than a quarter of a mile from them fully two hundred Comanches, decked in their paraphernalia of war, were circling about the train, drawing nearer and nearer.

"I tell you, boys, to stand there and see what was going on and know I was helpless to give assistance to my friends, was an awful experience. I could see the train men getting their arms to repel the atack, and all the time the band of Indians was narrowing the circle. As they drew near I could see them lying along the sides of their ponies, keeping their bodies out of sight, while the frequent puffs of smoke told that they had begun firing.

"But the train men held their fire. It was a desperate situation, and they seemed to realize its hopelessness. The Comanches now made a quick turn and the whole band swept like a thunder cloud right down onto the train. Then a little cloud of white smoke arose from the train, and like dead flies from a ceiling in winter, the savages dropped from their ponies.

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"The besieged had barely time to turn to meet the reinforcements of the savages when the other band, making a rapid flank movement, rushed pell mell to the attack again.

"Then they closed in on the train. What I saw made me weak and sick and the glass fell from my hand. When I looked again the savages were inside the corral formed by the wagons, and then the rapid approach of darkness hid the awful sight from view.

"A half hour later a lurid flame rose from where the wagons of the train had stood, and in the awful light I saw the mad dance of the victorious Comanches, their hideous bodies lined darkly against the red glare of the flames.

"It was a dreadful and miserable night I passed, and at the first streak of dawn I scanned the plains for a glimpse of the Indians. I hardly expected that they would be in sight, for as usual they do not tarry long near the scene of their depredations. But, as I afterward learned, they had gotten hold of a keg of brandy in one of the wagons and had drank till they were wild with intoxication.

"So it happened that they remained less than a mile from where the train had stood, and in the gray of the dawn I saw them moving out in a long line, headed in my direction.

"I knew that should they discover me my life would pay the forfeit, and I realized that I must act at once.

"In great haste I brought my team and hitched it to the wagon, and though my horse still limped painfully, I drove with all haste away from the trail to this little valley.

"I went to work as soon as I reached here and began unloading my stores from the wagon. These I quickly carried to the thicket along the face of the cliff, where I concealed them, for I feared that I should never be able to conceal both team and wagon.

"When the work was done I picketed the horses and returned to the thicket. It was not long till I saw the Indians appear over a swell in the prairie, and it was evident that they were heading directly for the place where I was concealed.

"This was precisely what I had feared, for I suspected that they knew of the water in the valley and on this account would visit the place before leaving the vicinity.

"I was glad enough, now, that I had made no attempt to conceal the wagon and team, for the tracks would have betrayed me. As it was, I felt that I might escape with my stores hidden in the thicket, while I might lose the wagon and team.

"In a little while the redskins came swarming into the valley, and no sooner had they discovered the wagon than they pounced upon it. They lost no time in rifling it of what I had left, and then set fire to the wagon. My horses they took, beating the lame one cruelly to make him keep pace with the others.

"Within an hour after entering the valley, they had taken their departure. They made no search for the owner of the wagon as far as I could discover, and I felt thankful when they were away.

"While hiding in the thicket I discovered the opening leading to this cave, and as soon as I felt sure that the Indians were well away from the place, I removed my stores hither and decided to take up my abode here for the time being. I could see at once that the cave was so situated that I could do so safely, for not only was there very small chance of any one discovering my place of abode, but if such a thing should happen I need have no fear of attack from any enemy since it would be easy to hold the cavern against a small army.

"In the afternoon I collected some fuel and carried into the cave, not thinking it safe to build a fire outside, and there cooked the first meal I had eaten that day. My wagon and team were gone, and I was now like a sailor marooned on a deasert island. I could not go on nor could I return, and so I contented myself by waiting for something to turn up.

"I hoped that some train would pass this way, but as it was now late in September I hardly dared to believe that fortune would so favor me. A week or so later an old hunter who had spent many years on the plains hunting buffaloes, came into the valley. We kind of took a liking for each other from the first and he made my cave his headquarters.

"We hunted together and killed a large number of buffaloes, taking the hides and jerking part of the meat, which we dried for the market. When we had got all the hides and fried meat he could haul in his wagon we hit the trail for Council Grove, where we disposed of the whole load for something over three hundred dollars. After a few days spent in Council Grove, we returned here and spent the remainder of the fall hunting and drying buffalo meat. He had a regular trade established and decided to remain with me during the winter, and so we spent the winter in the cave.

"I tell you, we found it pretty snug quarters when a blizzard struck the plains, and as we had plenty to do inside, we felt comfortable enough. Dick Frisby—that is the old hunter's name—had hit on the plan of spending the winter dressing buffalo hides, and as he was an expert at the work, we made a good thing out of it.

"This summer we killed a large number of buffaloes, and Dick has already made three trips to Council Grove with the meat and hides, and is now absent on the fourth.

"That is how I came to remain here, and here I am still, and I cannot tell how long I may remain.

"I am getting used to this sort of life, and I have about come to the conclusion that it suits me better than toiling and sweating inside of the pale of civilization. Anyway, I am my own boss here and there is no one to make me afraid—excepting some prowling bands of Comanches, but as yet they have not bothered me."

This capital story of boyhood luck and adventure will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. It will be to your pleasure and profit to follow its characters to the dramatic and remarkable close. Would you like our fine stereoscopes without cost, or six of our fine winter patterns entirely free, or one of our splendid knit woolen shawls? Then subscribe for the Ledger and they will be sent to you. Read our premium advertisements in this issue.

Out of the Mouths of Babes.

Mrs. Neighbors—It's too bad of you, Mildred, to worry your mamma so.

Little Mildred—Huh! you don't know mamma. She worries me more than I worry her.

Mother—Harold, why did you take your little sister's candy this morning?

Small Harold—I don't know, mamma. Perhaps I'm a kleptomaniac.

Little Ethel (looking at picture book)—Elmer, where do you s'pose Adam got the names for all the animals?

Small Elmer—Why, from the dictionary, of course.

Little Irene—I found a four-leaved clover today. That means good luck.

Small Elmer—Huh! I found a horseshoe. That means still better luck.

Little Irene—How do you know?

Small Elmer—'Cause I can sell it for 2 cents.

Mistaken for a Deer.

"Where is that old guide with long, white whiskers?" queried the amateur hunter as he entered the great north woods.

"I am him, sir," replied the guide with the furrowed chin and high cheek bones.

"But you haven't long white whiskers, my friend?"

"I did have, sir, but some of those blamed city hunters shot them all off."

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A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE.

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A friend who has coin and will trust.
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But start right in blowing the dust.

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This is written for men, who are suffering from a broken down system as a result of youthful indiscretions or excesses. Listen to my advice. Stop experimenting with "sample treatments," electric belts, "specialists," patent medicines and other quack treatments. To continually take medicine may destroy the digestion, poison the system and render your case incurable.
For years I was nervous, weak and run down, and in order to regain my health I tried different remedies and treatments without much improvement. Finally I went to Europe and consulted a prominent physician and my health was restored under his treatment. The prescription for the remedy which cured me I still have in my possession and as I know from my own experience how difficult it is to get cured I have decided to help others and to every sufferer who writes to me I will send in sealed letter a copy of the prescription together with necessary information free of charge.
Men in all parts of this country who suffered in one way or another from symptoms resulting from overwork, youthful errors, indiscretions or excesses, such as nervousness, losses, weak manhood, poor memory, lost vitality, lack of ambition, depression, bashfulness, pain in the back, general debility, etc., have taken advantage of my offer, and I have received hundreds of unsolicited letters from men, young and old, in all walks of life, saying that they had also become cured. The prescription calls for a combination of powerful but perfectly safe ingredients, and is so written that you can get it filled in a good drug store at small cost. I send nothing C.O.D. and I have no scheme of any kind to get your money or sell you medicine that you don't want, and if you do not find me honest in every way you are at liberty to expose me in this paper.
This notice may not appear again, therefore write me today and get a copy of my prescription and necessary information free by return mail. I will also inform you how I can make this offer without any loss to me. Address
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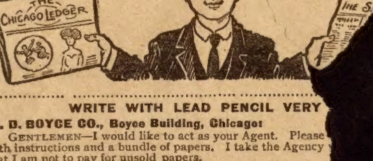

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The Fateful Marriage.

(Continued from page eleven.)

mise me you will take care of Grace, and after a few months, when the grass grows green and the flowers are blooming over my grave, you will make her your wife?" He gropes about the coverlet till he finds one of Mark's hands, then clasps it in his own. "Promise me?" he entreats, with eager impatience.

"I promise," Mark replies in a husky voice. "But you may recover yet, Sir Richard."

"No; I shall not," he responds. "The only honorable thing I have ever done in life will be to leave it. Even my death cannot atone for the suffering I have caused Grace and yourself."

"Don't!" Mark cried with emotion, "we will not think of that now; it is past and gone."

"It is very good of you to speak like that, Eldon," he said, with difficulty. "I won't ask you to forgive me; men don't forgive so readily as women." Here he paused for breath, the sands of life were nearly run. "But, in the years to come—when you and Grace are happy together—you will think less hard of me?"

"I forgive you fully, Sir Richard. My own life has not been quite blameless," Mark replied with deep feeling.

"I don't think it is in man's nature to—to forgive so readily as that, Eldon. Just now you are sorry for me—but after a little a bitter feeling will—creep in against me—for having spoiled so many of the best days of your life."

"No; I swear it shall not. My forgiveness is complete and entire. There is too much wrongdoing and evil in my own life to sit in judgment upon you or any other man. You will believe that, won't you?" he asked with solemn earnestness.

"I will try," he answered faintly, "but I don't pretend to understand. I could never forgive so readily."

For a moment all is still in that chamber of death. Then the sick man shudders, and his breath comes in quick, short gasps.

"Grace," he gasps, "give me your hand. All is dark—and cold—and chill. The waters of the river of death are flowing—over me. Hold my hand—tighter—tighter—you are—slipping away—from me. God—bless—you, Grace—and—forgive."

The eyelids flutter for a moment. There is a short, sharp struggle for breath, then all is calm and still; and Sir Richard Neville has passed out of this life forever.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

A year has passed away since Sir Richard has been laid in the grave. Grace is again in London, not at her mother's home, but at Lady Althea's. She has changed her heavy mourning for that of a less somber hue.

Beside her sits Mark Eldon, his dark, eager eyes on her lovely face.

"You will marry me at once, won't you, dear?" he asked tenderly. "He only asked us to wait till the grass was green and the flowers blooming over his grave. They have been there many months now. You will not delay our happiness longer, dear? Say when it shall be?"

"It shall be whenever you wish," she answered, her head resting on his bosom.

He folds her to his breast and kisses her again and again.

"My darling!" he whispers fondly. "I am glad we were strong in the midst of temptation. There is no remorse, no bitter regrets to cloud our happiness now. Oh, Grace, after all, God has been good to you and me."

"Yes, Mark, God has rewarded us abundantly. Our happiness will be all the greater, because we have tasted of sorrow and temptation."

"My darling, it was you that taught me to resist temptation. I was rebellious and wilful, but you made me see the right."

"Me?" she exclaimed in wonder. "You surely forget. There was a day when I stumbled, but you would not let me fall."

"Hush, dear!" he said fondly. "We will both be very thankful that we were given the needed strength to stand firm."

A few minutes later Lady Althea and Cousin Charley's wife enter. They pause just inside the door and scan the happy faces.

"You don't need to tell me. I know what has happened," Lady Althea says laughingly. "I hope and trust you will be very, very happy," and tears of sympathy shone in her lovely eyes.

"Yes," chimed in Cousin Charley's wife, "I was wondering the other day how long you two would wait before making up your mind to be happy."

Lady Althea's face grew very grave and serious.

"What is it, dear?" Grace asks. "I know by your face you have something on your mind."

"I suppose I may as well tell it at once, get it over," her friend replied with ced smile. "We have just heard from st reliable source, that the Countess sselgrave has committed suicide in her d's castle in the dreary solitudes of ry. It appears that the marriage not a happy one. The Count was cruel d exacting, and proved a merciless tyrant. It seems the Count loved her passionately, but neither trusted nor believed in her. Once his wife, he carried her off to his gloomy possessions in Hungary. There, she might fret and chafe as she would, but she could never escape him. To her horror she soon learned that she had sold herself into a bondage from which there was no escape. The world and its gaieties were lost to her forever, and galled, fretted, heart-broken, and despairing, she ended her life, preferring death to a life of solitary splendor."

For several seconds there is absolute silence. Then Grace looks up, and her eyes are dim with unshed tears.

"Poor, misguided soul!" she says pityingly. "Her punishment was great."

"Yes," Mrs. Duncan says softly, "truly, the wages of sin is death."

The end.

The Crime of the Black Thirteen.

(Continued from page seven.)

could very easily be prevailed on to think the worst of his so-called friends, and be equally ready to betray their secrets in a moment of spleen and resentment.

This, at least, was what Porter thought.

We shall now see how far he was correct in his surmise.

"Yes," repeated Porter, "but for me, you would have been a dead man. Do you recollect," he pursued, pointedly, "how you came by that blow on the head? Had the stroke been a little lower, your brains would have been dashed out."

The outlaw groaned profoundly.

It was plain that his head still bothered him. His hand went up spasmodically, and he felt at the bandage with which Porter had bound up his wound.

"Here, take a little more of the brandy," said the detective, with some display of feeling.

"Brandy?" muttered the wounded outlaw, mechanically.

"Yes," replied the detective, "it's the fourth or fifth drink I've given you. Don't be afraid; it will do you no harm. Drink!"

Porter held the flask to Bertram's lips, the outlaw, with a grateful look, drank greedily of the contents of the flask.

"Now, how do you feel?" Porter asked, in his most soothing tones.

"Better—much better," Bertram slowly responded. "But who are you—who are you?" he repeated riveting his eyes on the detective's face, after the manner of a man collecting his scattered wits.

The continuation of this splendid story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming months. With every subscription we send entirely free of cost one of our splendid stereoscopes or any six of our standard patterns, or one of our genuine knit woolen shawls. See our advertising pages.

* * *

If a lamp-wick sticks and will not work easily, pull out a thread at each edge. This will often mend matters without any more trouble.

Poor Molly.

Not long ago a woman appeared at the office of the claims agent of an Arkansas railroad.

"Yo' steam-kars is done kilt my mule Molly!" she announced, tragically.

"Well, madam, if it was the fault of the company, you will be recompensed, you may rest assured," the agent said, soothingly. "What were the circumstances, and what was the mule worth?"

"Molly war the best mule ah ever seed," the woman said, wiping her eyes with a bonnet string. "Ah done ploughed that mule for seven years, an' thar warn't nothin' the matter with her, 'ceptin' she was kinder lame in her nigh hind laig, an' blind in one eye. Ah give $40 an' two bed-quilts an' three pecks of dried peaches for her, and she was as good as the day ah got her."

"Where was the mule killed?" the agent asked.

"Hit war at the crossin' an' yo' fast mail train jest knocked her plumb over the fence an' inter a gully!"

"The mule strayed upon the track, I presume?"

The woman looked at him indignantly.

"Oh, no! Molly never would 'a' been fool enough to walk in front of a train—my old man was ridin' her!" she said. "Do yo' think yo' kin 'low me $40 fer her?"

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Nothing gives a greater sense of warmth and comfort than a fur scarf and muff.

5823 Fancy Waist with Low or High Neck ,32 to 40 Bust.
Such a round neck bodice as this one is very generally becoming.

5849 Blouse or Shirt Waist, 32 to 42 Bust.
To be made with long or three-quarter sleeves. The plain tailored waist never goes out of style.

5835 Fitted Corset Cover, 32 to 44 Bust.
The plain fitted corset cover suits many figures better than any other sort and is in fact the most desirable beneath any smoothly fitting gown.

5836 Girl's Dress, 6 to 12 Years.
An exceedingly pretty frock for little girls.

5795 Girl's Yoke Dress with Bertha, 6 to 12 Years.
To be made with round or high neck, with or without the bertha.

5831 Child's Empire Frock, 2, 4 and 6 Years.
With separate guimpe that can be made with short or long sleeves.

5820 Girl's Dress with Guimpe, 6 to 12 Years.
The guimpe can be made with either elbow or three-quarter sleeves.

5813 Girl's Coat, 8 to 14 Years.
Long loose coats make most becoming wraps for growing girls and are to be noted in a variety of attractive colors and materials.

5796 Misses' Cutaway Coat, 14 and 16 Years.
Unquestionably cutaway coats are favorites of the season and many exceedingly smart variations are shown.

5793 Child's Coat with Shield, 2 to 6 Years.
The long coat, that covers the frock, is the favorite for little children and is worn in cloth of all colors, in velvet, velveteen, corduroy and cheviot.

5846 Boy's Shirt Waist, 4 to 12 Years.
To be made with attached roll-over or separate high collar.

5845 "Buster Brown" Suit, 2 to 8 Years.
There is no suit that the small boy wears that pleases him better than this one which is masculine enough to satisfy his ambitions while it is childish enough to please his mamma.

5847 Five Gored Skirt, 22 to 32 Waist.
To be made in round or walking length, with inverted plaits or habit back

5828 Seven Gored Skirt, 22 to 32 Waist.
The plain gored flared skirt is always a graceful and becoming one and this season will have extended vogue.

5792 Nine Gored Skirt with Panels, 22 to 30 Waist.
The skirt that is made with panels is a favorite among the latest models and has much to commend it.

5816 Seven Gored Skirt, 22 to 30 Waist.
It is eminently graceful, takes long and beautiful lines and can be trimmed to give the tunic, or shawl, suggestion very easily and readily.

5825 Semi-Fitted Coat, 34 to 42 Bust.
The semi-fitted coat is always a becoming and satisfactory one.

5797 Princess Gown, 32 to 40 Bust.
To be made in round or walking length. The princess gown always is a graceful and attractive one and just now it is high in favor with la mode.

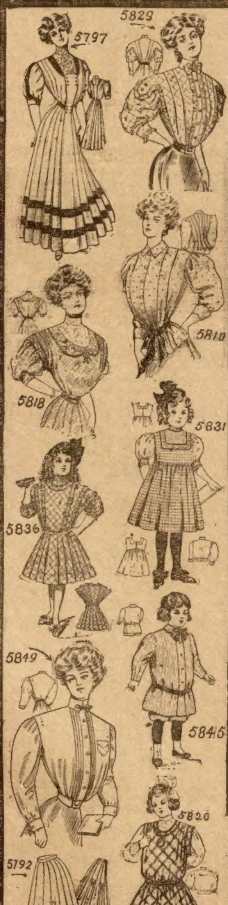
5810 Box Plaited House Jacket, 32 to 42 Bust.
To be made with three-quarter or long sleeves. Simple house jackets are always in demand for they fill a definite, practical need.

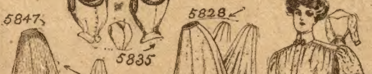
5818 Over Blouse or Jumper, 32 to 40 Bust.
The over blouse is made in one piece and is tucked over the shoulders, the sleeves being cut in one with it.

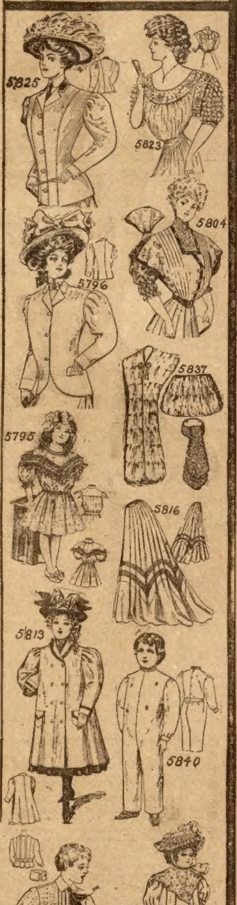
5843 Blouse or Shirt Waist, 32 to 42 Bust.
To be made with or without the yoke at back. The plain tailored shirt waist is always needed.

5804 Over Blouse or Jumper, 32 to 40 Bust.
Each new variation of the over blouse seems a bit more attractive than the last and each one is certain to find a place in the wardrobe.

5829 Blouse with Bretelles, 32 to 40 Bust.
To be made with three-quarter or full length sleeves. No prettier variety of the ever-useful blouse has yet appeared than this one.







A Valentine Party.

If any one is thinking of having a party, Valentine day is a fine time for entertaining.

Have each guest upon arriving deposit his or her valentine in a large box placed in the hall for that purpose. The girls should write "To My Cavalier," the boys "To My Lady," on one corner of the valentine, which must be addressed to no particular person.

When all have assembled St. Valentine himself should enter the parlor. He should wear his skull cap, long white beard (made of cotton), a long cloak, and carry a sack of valentines. Standing in the center of the room, let him proceed to auction off each valentine as he takes it from the pack. All sorts of funny bids can be made—promises of a dance, a necktie, a share of ice cream, a compliment, the first favor asked, etc. To make fun the bids should be as ridiculous as possible. St. Valentine is at liberty to accept whatever he wants. The payment of the debt must be exacted when the identity of the person is revealed, when the valentine is opened.

A pretty way to distribute valentines at a party is to suspend from the chandelier a Cupid's bow and arrow. Use these for delivering the valentines. Stick the missive on the point of the arrow, which is hurled toward the person to whom it is addressed.

Have all the valentines original, and use them for pairing off your friends. The more absurd the rhymes the better. Prose will answer, but be sure to omit anything in the least rude or liable to hurt any one's feelings—for Valentine was the saint of love, and his day should be devoted to messages and acts of affection.

A NORSE LAMENT.

A young maid who by birth was Norwegian,
Said: "They tell me that there is a region,
Where men are so dear
That once every year
They send valentines by the legion."

Be at peace with your neighbor even if it means war with yourself.

DEAR LITTLE VALENTINE.

A little paper and ribbon and ink;
A spray from a blossoming vine—
A dear little lassie, as sweet as a pink,
Out of these made a valentine.

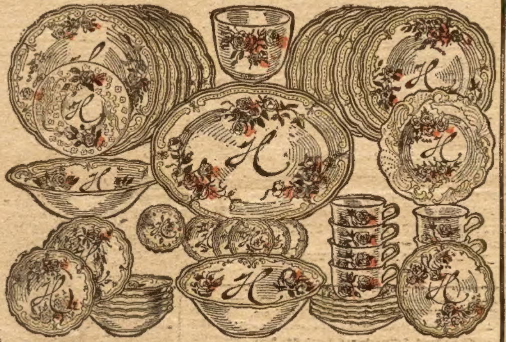
She fashioned it, sealed it and sent it with love,
Her dear little face all a-shine;
And a dear little lad on the floor above
Got the dear little valentine.

A VALENTINE THOUGHT.

Of all the beasts the porcupine
Is one to which I least incline.
I'd hide away
If one should say
That he would be my valentine.

FREE THIS BEAUTIFUL MONOGRAM DINNER SET OF 42 PIECES

Each piece decorated with your initial in gold. Positively the biggest and finest dinner set ever given away as a free present. Any lady can earn this set in a few hours' time.



This beautiful Monogram Dinner Set, full size, for family use, consisting of 42 pieces just as shown, is a present that will bring delight to the heart of any housewife and can be had **absolutely free of charge** for a few hours' easy, pleasant work among your neighbors and the people of your vicinity.

This set is made of **finest Parisian China**, is a pure delicate white and decorated with wild rose design in colors, with the edges traced in gold. It is a set of dishes that you will be proud to own and put on your table and show your friends.

Your own initial in pure gold will be on every piece except the cups and saucers. The set consists of six large plates, six dessert plates, six large cups and saucers, six sauce or fruit dishes, six butter plates, two large vegetable dishes, one large platter, one cake plate, one bread plate, and one gravy bowl, making 42 separate pieces, positively the grandest array of dishes ever offered for this small amount of work.

Send No Money. Just your name and address and I will send you **our big free outfit**, so that you can interest only 24 of your neighbors and people in your vicinity in our special offer, collecting 25 cents from each one and sending us the money collected. It is easy, pleasant work, and our offer is so liberal, so unique, so far above the average offer made that you will have no trouble at all in interesting 24 neighbors or persons in your vicinity, and sending us the money collected. We send the set immediately, securely packed, and safe delivery guaranteed. No delay. No red tape. The set is yours just as soon as you have fulfilled these simple, easy conditions.

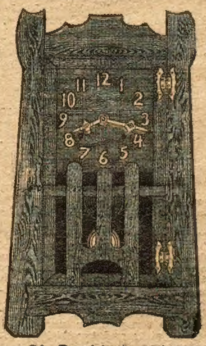
100,000 Satisfied Women is our record for the past year. **Just think of that**, we have sent out over 100,000 sets of these beautiful Monogram Dishes to persons who have helped us introduce our grand special offer, and every one of them is a pleased, satisfied patron. They all say that they never saw a more beautiful set of dishes and never did any work that they found easier and more pleasant. **Why should you not have a set of these dishes?** They will not cost you one cent of your own money and you surely would not object to getting them **absolutely free of charge.** When we send **you our big free outfit, we will also send over** 1,000 testimonials of those who have earned a set of these dishes, every one of whom will testify to our honest, prompt and liberal treatment.

Write me today and start to work at once. **Let me send you my free outfit anyway** and if you don't think you can succeed, I will take it back and no harm done. Just write your name and address plainly on a postal card and enclose it in an envelope and send it to me and I will arrange everything by return mail so you can earn this grand Monogram Dinner Set with your own initial as mentioned above, in a few hours' time.

J. B. DIGNAM, Manager, 120 S. Clinton St., Dept. 160, Chicago

MISSION CLOCK FREE

I have received a few thousand magnificent 8-Day Mission Clocks to distribute free. I will give you the opportunity, if you write at once, of securing this prize without one cent of expense on your part—only a little work in my behalf.

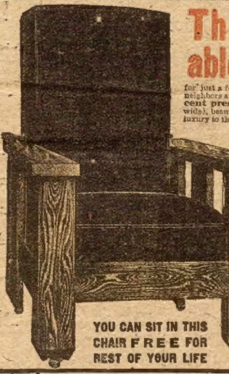


This is the genuine Mission Style Clock that you have heard so much about. It is nearly two feet high, solid and substantial throughout. Cathedral chimes toll the hour and half-hour in sonorous tones. The hands and figures on the dial are polished brass and it is a perfect time-keeper, with a timed, tested and regulated EIGHT-DAY MOVEMENT.

This is not a cheap clock, but is **the latest up-to-date, mission style**, the same as you will find in the homes of the wealthy and well-to-do people everywhere. It is a clock you can put in your parlor or sitting room and be proud to show to your friends and neighbors. It is a premium worth getting, for a clock is something you can always use and this clock is not only useful but also a handsome addition to your parlor or sitting room and will last a lifetime.

This Grand Clock is absolutely free to any lady or anybody who will show my special offer among her friends and neighbors and get only 20 to accept it at 25c each and send me the $5 collected. All I ask is that you do this little bit of work for me, which will require but a few moments of your time and immediately upon hearing from you with your remittance, I will not only send you the clock absolutely free, but will also pay the freight charges to your town, so that it will not cost you one cent of your own money, even for charges. I want to get my special offer introduced in every town in the U. S. as quickly as possible and am giving this grand present as inducement for your prompt assistance. **Let me send you my free outfit anyway**, also a great, big illustration of the clock, which will give you a better idea of just what it is. I will send everything prepaid, so that it will not cost you one cent to try and if you do not care to accept my offer, you can return the outfit and no harm done. Be the first person in your town to secure this Grand 8-Day Mission Clock. Write me about it today. Address

GEO. A. FULLER, Sec'y, 46-48 W. Monroe St., Dept. 7396, Chicago



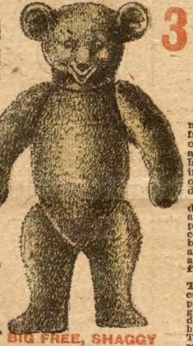
YOU CAN SIT IN THIS CHAIR FREE FOR REST OF YOUR LIFE

This Grand, Comfortable Morris Chair FREE

for just a few moments of your time devoted to easy, pleasant work among your neighbors and people of your vicinity. This is certainly **a grand, magnificent present**, for it is full sized (nearly four feet high and two and a half feet wide), beautifully and comfortably upholstered and will lend an air of comfort and luxury to the parlor or sitting room of the most prosperous home. **It is a big, comfortable chair**, with reclining back, which can be adjusted so you can sit up straight or recline or lie down, just as desired. Of course we can give you no real idea in this illustration, of the beauty, comfort and elegance of this artistic piece of furniture. **It is a surprise and delight** wherever we send it, for it is really far greater value than people expect to get, and our friends wonder how we can afford to make such a liberal offer.

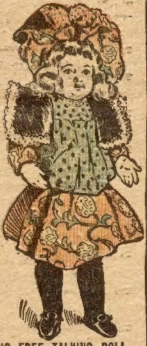
SEND NO MONEY. Just name and address and we will send you our **free outfit** and full instructions how to proceed. Get only 28 of your neighbors or people in your vicinity to accept our grand special offer at 75c each and send us the money collected and we will send you this magnificent Morris Chair (your choice of golden or weathered oak) immediately on hearing from you. We **positively guarantee** this chair to give satisfaction and to be exactly as represented. **Send name and address today** and get our free outfit and see what you can do. If you do not succeed, outfit can be returned and no harm done. This chair is certainly worth working for and any enterprising person can fulfill our simple, easy conditions in a few hours' time. Do not miss this opportunity to get this big, comfortable, luxurious Morris Chair, **absolutely free**, without costing you one single cent of your own money. Address

CURRIER CO., Dept. 160, Currier Bldg., Chicago


Teddy Grunts Like a Live Bear
Movable Arms and Legs

BIG FREE, SHAGGY GRUNTING TEDDY BEAR

3 BIG PRESENTS FREE TO GIRLS



BIG FREE TALKING DOLL

This beautiful bisque doll is nearly half a yard tall, has beautiful curly hair, big blue eyes which open and shut, is **magnificently and fashionably dressed**, and a large hat, and has shoes and stockings that can be taken off and put on, so that you can play with this doll just as if it were a real baby.

This is also a **wonderful talking doll** and says papa and mamma plainly and distinctly. The big blue eyes, the pretty hair, the peaches and cream complexion cheeks and the little rosebud mouth makes this the handsomest and dearest doll you could imagine, **and I want every girl to get one free.**

I also give a 27-piece China Tea Set consisting of 6 cups, 6 saucers, 6 plates, tea pot, sugar bowl, cream pitcher and 6 spoons. It is not every girl who has a set of dishes for her doll, but I am going to include this handsome little set with every doll. The set is beautifully decorated like the real china in the large sets costing many dollars.

And I am not going to stop here, but I am also going to give a **real, genuine, big, brown shaggy Teddy Bear**, with special movable arms and legs, so that he can sit up, lie down, stand on all fours and be placed in all sorts of comical positions. By just giving him a little squeeze he makes a funny grunt that sets everybody laughing. You can have more fun with Teddy than anything you ever owned. This is the **real Teddy Bear**, girls, of which you have heard so much. Some girls prefer a Teddy Bear to a doll, but **I give both.**

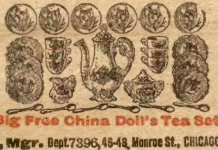
I GIVE ALL 3 PRESENTS FREE!

To any little girl (or big girl either) who will show my fine offer among her neighbors and people in her vicinity and interests only 12 persons in my special offer at 25c each and send me the $3 collected. You can do this slight service for me in two hours' time. **I don't charge you anything for my outfit**, as I send it free, and you can try and see what you can do, and if you can't very easily do the work on my plan there is no harm done. **However, I know any bright girl can earn** these presents without any trouble whatever. **Just think, you get a big handsome doll, a grunting Teddy Bear and a 27-piece tea set and 6 spoons** all for this little work. It is the most generous offer ever made, and every girl reader of this paper should write to me at once and get my full instructions and outfit, and then just as soon as you do the little service I require, I will send you the **Doll, Teddy Bear and Tea Set and Spoons absolutely free.** I arrange to pay **express charges**, so they will not cost you a penny. Write to me today and be the first in your neighborhood to get these beautiful **free gifts.**

The Editor of this paper knows we are reliable.

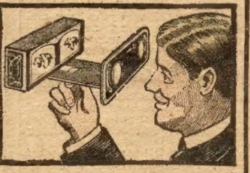
EXTRA GIFT FOR MAMMA

You can also give your mamma a beautiful ring as an extra gift if you will write me at once. This is a nine-stone ring, three large ruby doublets and six frosted pearls; given extra if you'll write at once. This beautiful ring is extra and **in addition** to the other three presents.



Big Free China Doll's Tea Set

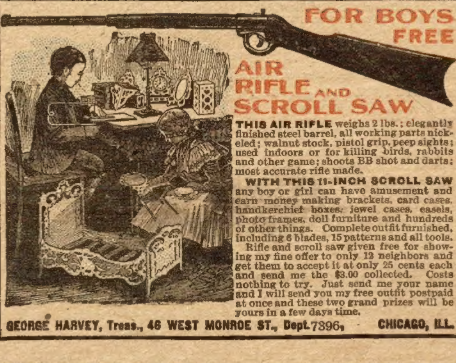
A. K. BOWEN, Mgr. Dept. 7396, 46-48, Monroe St., CHICAGO



STEREOSCOPE AND 50 FINE VIEWS FREE

Everybody can have barrels of fun and amusement with this collapsible stereoscope, which folds up in compact form and can be carried in pocket and enjoyed anywhere. Small size but perfect in every detail, extra strong lenses which enlarge and magnify the handsome views as lifelike and real as life. **Send name and address**, no money, and I will send you my free outfit, so that you can interest just four of your neighbors and people in your vicinity in my special offer at 25 cents each. Send me the $1 collected and immediately on receipt of remittance I will send you this handsome premium **and also an extra present** of 50 fine **Double Views**, all charges prepaid. It will only take you an hour to do the easy work. If you do not want to do it you don't have to; costs you nothing, however, to try. Am sure, though, you will be glad to help me for an hour and get this premium delivered free for your trouble. Just send me your name today and I will send you my outfit by return mail.

W. L. WILSON, Supt., Dept. 160, 122-124 Clinton St., Chicago



FOR BOYS FREE

AIR RIFLE AND SCROLL SAW

THIS AIR RIFLE weighs 2 lbs.; elegantly finished steel barrel, all working parts nickeled; walnut stock, pistol grip, peep sights; used indoors or for killing birds, rabbits and other game; shoots BB shot and darts; most accurate rifle made.

WITH THIS 11-INCH SCROLL SAW any boy or girl can have amusement and earn money making brackets, card cases, handkerchief boxes, jewel cases, easels, photo frames, doll furniture and hundreds of other things. Complete outfit furnished, including 6 blades, 15 patterns and all tools.

Rifle and scroll saw given free for showing my fine offer to only 12 neighbors and get them to accept it at only 25 cents each and send me the $3.00 collected. Costs nothing to try. Just send me your name and I will send you my free outfit postpaid at once and these two grand prizes will be yours in a few days time.

GEORGE HARVEY, Treas., 46 WEST MONROE ST., Dept. 7396, CHICAGO, ILL.